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Arthur Schnitzler

Collected Works



Series Fifteen

The Collected Works of

ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

(1862-1931)



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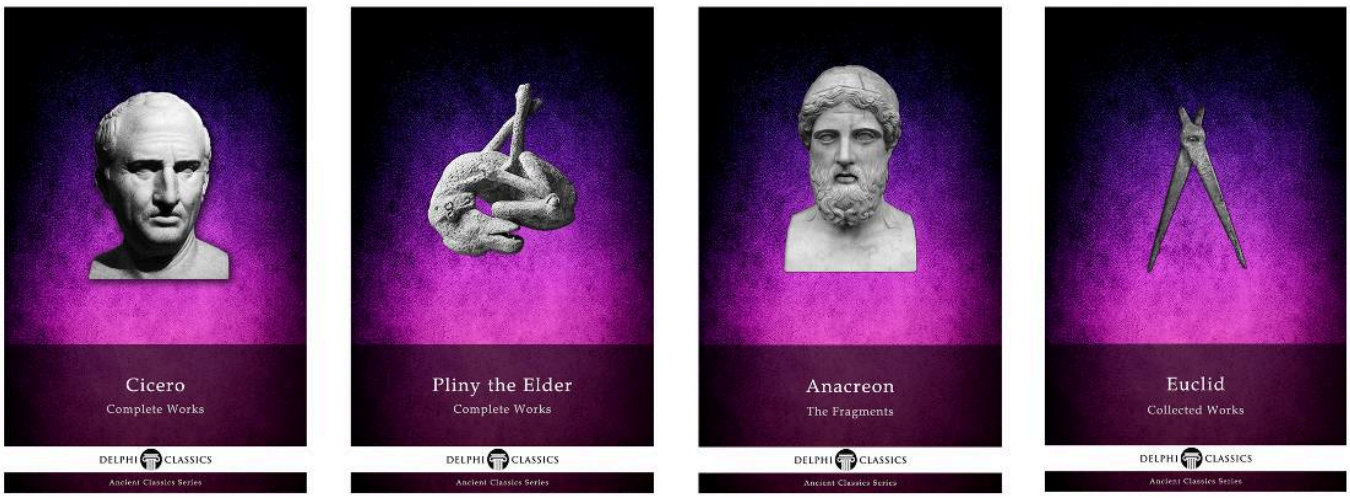
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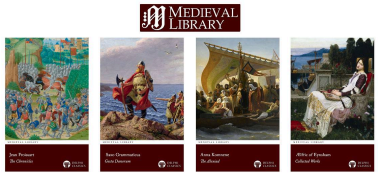


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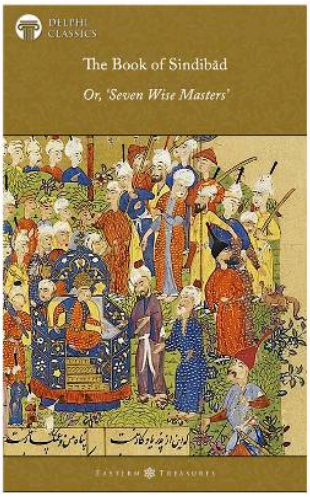


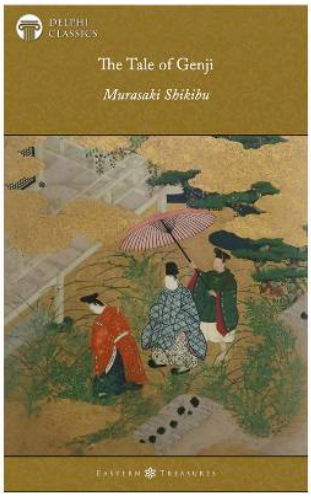
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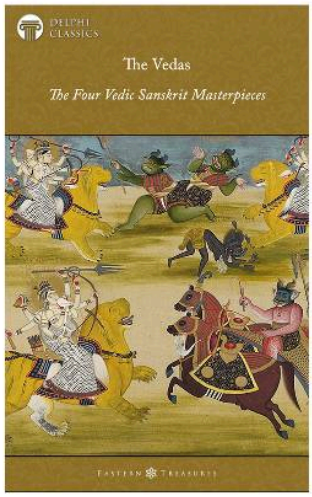


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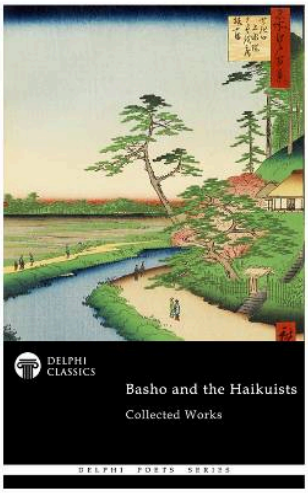


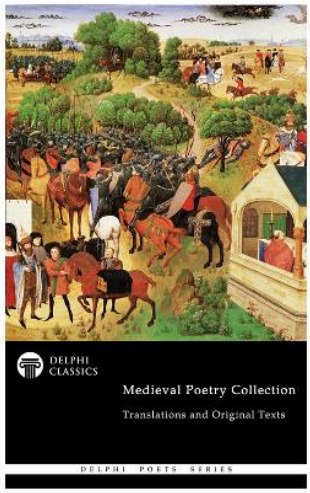


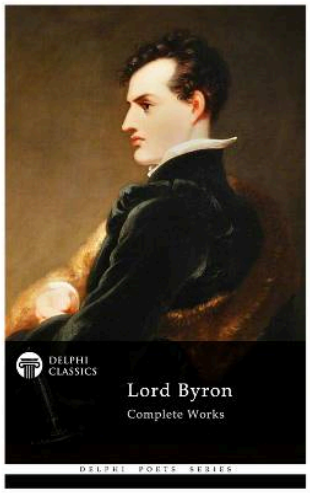


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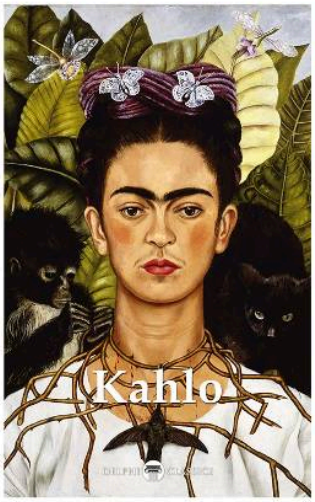


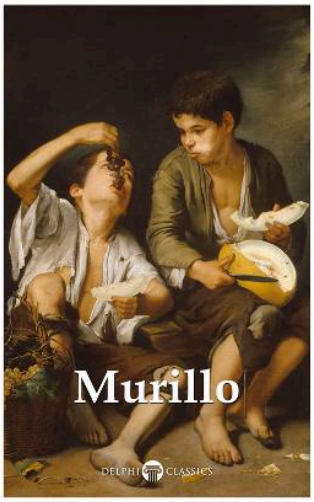


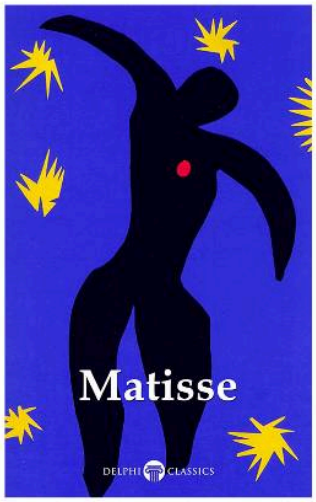


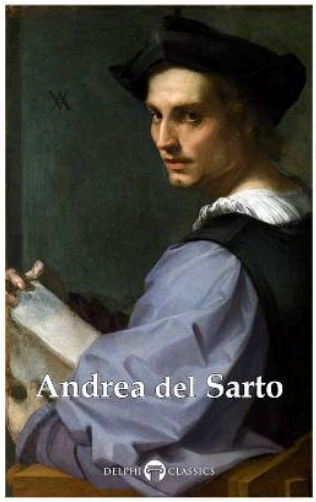
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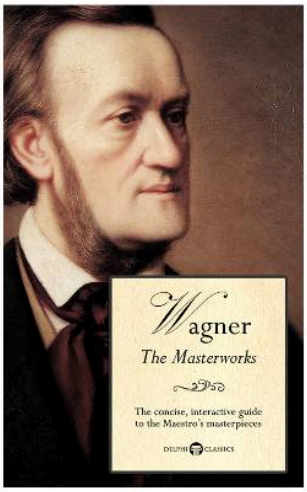


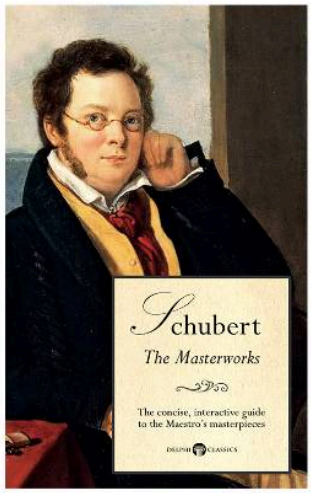


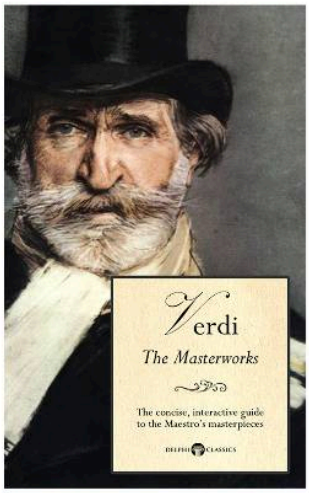


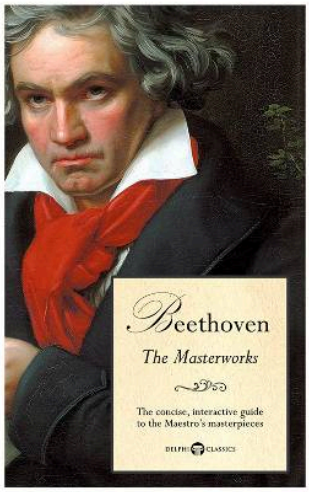
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DELPHI CLASSICS

The Collected Works of

ARTHUR SCHNITZLER



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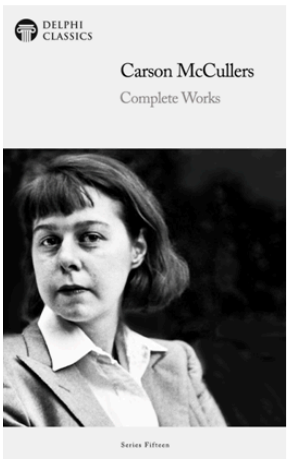
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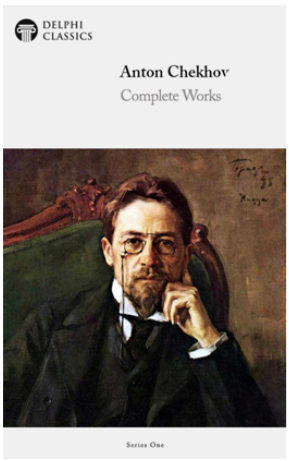
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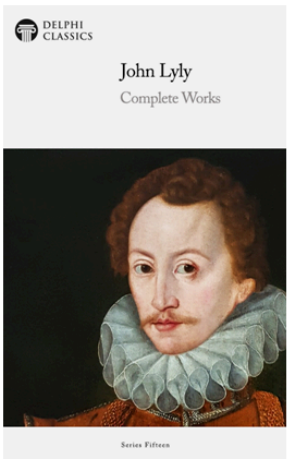
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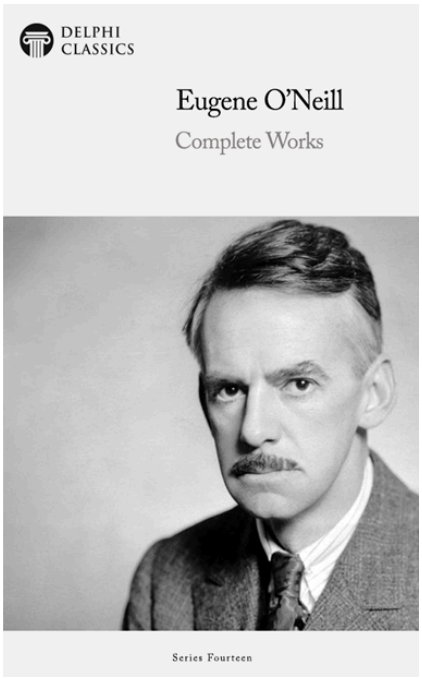
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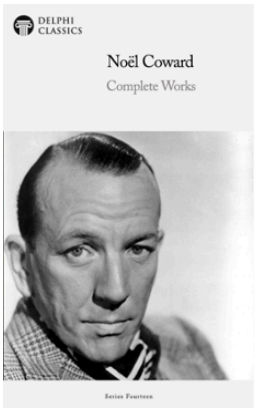


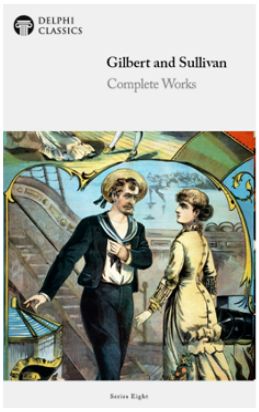


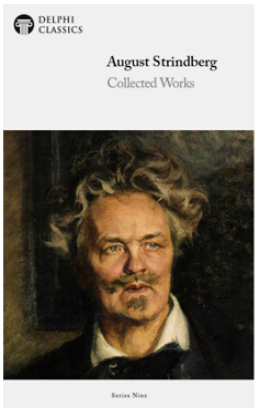


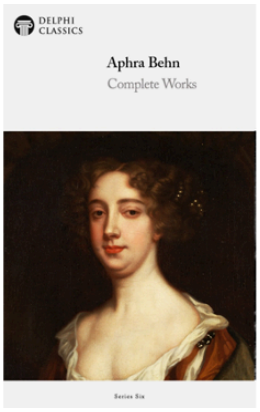


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The ‘Woman’ Trilogy



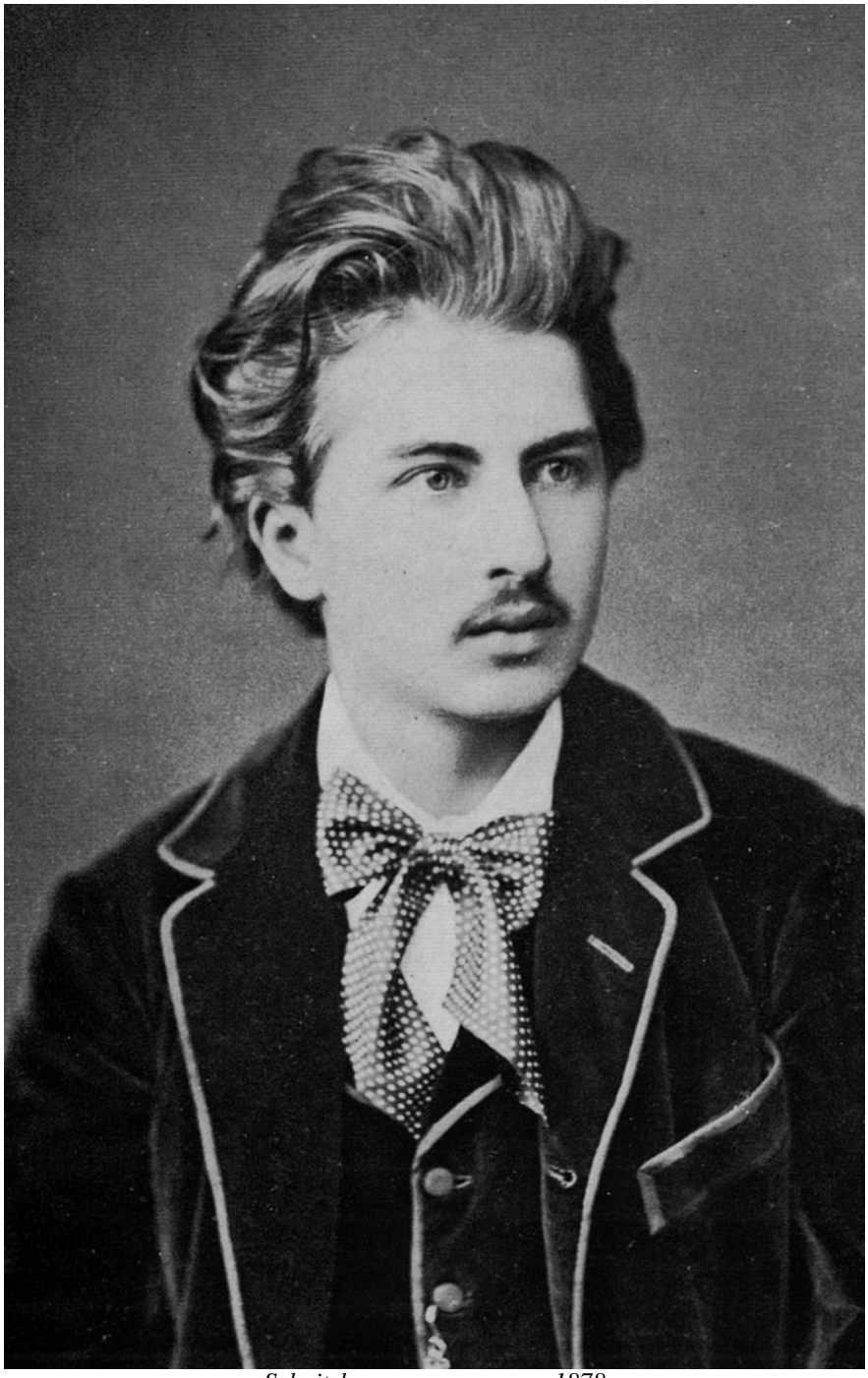
Leopoldstadt, central district of Vienna — Schnitzler’s birthplace



Panorama of Vienna in 1860, two years before Schnitzler's birth in the city



Schnitzler's birthplace, Praterstraße 16, Leopoldstadt



Schnitzler as a young man, 1878

Berta Garlan (1900)

Original German Title: 'Frau Bertha Garlan'

Translated by J. H. Wisdom, 1914

Widely regarded as one of the most significant representatives of Viennese Modernism, Arthur Schnitzler is celebrated for his psychological dramas and narratives that capture turn-of-the-century Viennese bourgeois life. Schnitzler was born at Praterstrasse 16, Leopoldstadt, Vienna, capital of the Austrian Empire. He was the son of a prominent Hungarian laryngologist, Johann Schnitzler (1835-1893), and Luise Markbreiter (1838-1911), a daughter of the Viennese doctor Philipp Markbreiter. Following in the footsteps of his father, Schnitzler began studying medicine at the University of Vienna in 1879 and six years later he received his doctorate. He began work at Vienna's General Hospital, but in time abandoned the practice of medicine in favour of pursuing a career in literature.

His first novel, *Frau Bertha Garlan*, appeared in 1901 in the literary journal *Neue Deutsche Rundschau* in Berlin. A few weeks later, S. Fischer, the journal's publisher, released it in book format. It would form the first part of a series of novels later coined with the name of the 'Woman' trilogy. Each instalment concerns the dilemmas facing an Austrian upper middle-class female protagonist, hemmed in by the strictures of modern day society. In this first novel, Bertha Garlan, a widow living in a small town, encounters her childhood sweetheart, the celebrated violin virtuoso Emil Lindbach, in Vienna. The story charts her attempts to escape the provincial confines of her existence.

We learn that before her marriage, Bertha was friends with Emil, at the time a student at the Vienna Conservatory. After she was forced to abandon her studies at her father's behest, the two friends lost touch, partly because she found Emil's advances too direct. After the death of her parents, Bertha married the older insurance clerk Victor Matthias Garlan, more out of a sense of duty than love, and moved with him to a small town, not far from Vienna, to live with his relatives.

The story opens three years after Bertha has mourned her unexpectedly deceased husband. Since then, she has lived alone with her young son, Fritz. She gives piano lessons and often depends on the goodwill of her brother-in-law and sister-in-law. In town, she has a suitor with a dubious reputation, Mr. Klingemann, in whom she shows little interest. Bertha feels a longing to escape the small-town atmosphere. Her role model is her neighbour Anna Rupius, whose husband is paralysed at home. One day, Bertha joins Mrs. Rupius and travels with her to Vienna to order some new clothes. While there she sees a concert poster announcing a charity concert featuring Emil. Now, her thoughts keep returning to her first love.

Back in her small town, Bertha takes a newspaper article about Emil's appointment as Royal Bavarian Chamber Virtuoso as an opportunity to write to him. She receives a reply almost immediately. They subsequently arrange to meet on her next trip to the city. They meet at the Kunsthistorisches Museum. The conversation is initially rather halting, as Emil reveals very little about himself. They arrange a second meeting for the evening. After dinner in a private room, Emil and Bertha spend a passionate night in an apartment he has rented specifically for this purpose. Bertha would like to spend more time with him before her return journey, but he declines, citing other commitments. Upon her return, Berta openly confesses her unconditional love in a letter, stating that she intends to move to Vienna. However, can Bertha expect to find

her love reciprocated from her erstwhile lover?

The novel has been noted for its autobiographical connection to Schnitzler's reunion with his childhood sweetheart Franziska Reich (1862-1930) – "his little Fännchen" — then a widow living in Bielitz. In May 1899, they met again at the Secession building, echoing the reunion of Berta and Emil. The brief affair that unfolded in the following days was more significant for her than for him, as can be seen from her letters and his diary.

Like Schnitzler's later novella *Frau Beate und ihr Sohn* (1913), the events, despite the chosen third-person narrative style, are provided exclusively from the protagonist's perspective, encompassing not only external events, but also her detailed thoughts and dreams. Both novels centre on a young widow who, after a long period of abstinence, throws herself into a love affair, revels in the overwhelming erotic sensations, but is both disappointed by her lover and unable to resolve the contradictions and double standards of societal codes of conduct.

Frau Bertha Garlan

Roman

von

Arthur Schnitzler



Berlin
S. Fischer, Verlag
1901

The first edition's title page

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Schnitzler's father, Johann Schnitzler, a laryngologist and professor

I

SHE WAS WALKING slowly down the hill; not by the broad high road which wound its way towards the town, but by the narrow footpath between the trellises of the vines. Her little boy was with her, hanging on to her hand and walking all the time a pace in front of her, because there was not room on the footpath for them to walk side by side.

The afternoon was well advanced, but the sun still poured down upon her with sufficient power to cause her to pull her dark straw hat a little further down over her forehead and to keep her eyes lowered. The slopes, at the foot of which the little town lay nestling, glimmered as though seen through a golden mist; the roofs of the houses below glistened, and the river, emerging yonder amongst the meadows outside the town, stretched, shimmering, into the distance. Not a quiver stirred the air, and it seemed as if the cool of the evening was yet far remote.

Bertha stooped for a moment and glanced about her. Save for her boy, she was all alone on the hillside, and around her brooded a curious stillness. At the cemetery, too, on the hilltop, she had not met anybody that day, not even the old woman who usually watered the flowers and kept the graves tidy, and with whom Bertha used often to have a chat. Bertha felt that somehow a considerable time had elapsed since she had started on her walk, and that it was long since she had spoken to anyone.

The church clock struck — six. So, then, scarcely an hour had passed since she had left the house, and an even shorter time since she had stopped in the street to chat with the beautiful Frau Rupius. Yet even the few minutes which had slipped away since she had stood by her husband's grave now seemed to be long past.

"Mamma!"

Suddenly she heard her boy call. He had slipped his hand out of hers and had run on ahead.

"I can walk quicker than you, mamma!"

"Wait, though! Wait, Fritz!" exclaimed Bertha. "You're not going to leave your mother alone, are you?"

She followed him and again took him by the hand.

"Are we going home already?" asked Fritz.

"Yes; we will sit by the open window until it grows quite dark."

Before long they had reached the foot of the hill and they began to walk towards the town in the shade of the chestnut trees which bordered the high-road, now white with dust. Here again they met but few people. Along the road a couple of wagons came towards them, the drivers, whip in hand, trudging along beside the horses. Then two cyclists rode by from the town towards the country, leaving clouds of dust behind them. Bertha stopped mechanically and gazed after them until they had almost disappeared from view.

In the meantime Fritz had clambered up onto the bench beside the road.

"Look, mamma! See what I can do!"

He made ready to jump, but his mother took hold of him by the arms and lifted him carefully to the ground. Then she sat down on the bench.

"Are you tired?" asked Fritz.

"Yes," she answered, surprised to find that she was indeed feeling fatigued.

It was only then that she realized that the sultry air had wearied her to the point of sleepiness. She could not, moreover, remember having experienced such warm weather in the middle of May.

From the bench on which she was sitting she could trace back the course of the path down which she had

come. In the sunlight it ran between the vine-trellises, up and up, until it reached the brightly gleaming wall of the cemetery. She was in the habit of taking a walk along that path two or three times a week. She had long since ceased to regard such visits to the cemetery as anything other than a mere walk. When she wandered about the well-kept gravel paths amongst the crosses and the tombstones, or stood offering up a silent prayer beside her husband's grave, or, maybe, laying upon it a few wild flowers which she had plucked on her way up, her heart was scarcely any longer stirred by the slightest throb of pain. Three years had, indeed, passed since her husband had died, which was just as long as their married life had lasted.

Her eyes closed and her mind went back to the time when she had first come to the town, only a few days after their marriage — which had taken place in Vienna. They had only indulged in a modest honeymoon trip, such as a man in humble circumstances, who had married a woman without any dowry, could treat himself to. They had taken the boat from Vienna, up the river, to a little village in Wachau, not far from their future home, and had spent a few days there. Bertha could still remember clearly the little inn at which they had stayed, the riverside garden in which they used to sit after sunset, and those quiet, rather tedious, evenings which were so completely different from those her girlish imagination had previously pictured to her as the evenings which a newly-married couple would spend. Of course, she had had to be content.

She was twenty-six years old and quite alone in the world when Victor Mathias Garlan had proposed to her. Her parents had recently died. A long time before, one of her brothers had gone to America to seek his fortune as a merchant. Her younger brother was on the stage; he had married an actress, and was playing comedy parts in third-rate German theatres. She was almost out of touch with her relations and the only one whom she visited occasionally was a cousin who had married a lawyer. But even that friendship had grown cool as years had passed, because the cousin had become wrapped up in her husband and children exclusively, and had almost ceased to take any interest in the doings of her unmarried friend.

Herr Garlan was a distant relation of Bertha's mother. When Bertha was quite a young girl he had often visited the house and made love to her in a rather awkward way. In those days she had no reasons to encourage him, because it was in another guise that her fancy pictured life and happiness to her. She was young and pretty; her parents, though not actually wealthy people, were comfortably off, and her hope was rather to wander about the world as a great pianiste, perhaps, as the wife of an artist, than to lead a modest existence in the placid routine of the home circle. But that hope soon faded. One day her father, in a transport of domestic fervour, forbade her further attendance at the conservatoire of music, which put an end to her prospects of an artistic career and at the same time to her friendship with the young violinist who had since made such a name for himself.

The next few years were singularly dull. At first, it is true, she felt some slight disappointment, or even pain, but these emotions were certainly of short duration. Later on she had received offers of marriage from a young doctor and a merchant. She refused both of them; the doctor because he was too ugly, and the merchant because he lived in a country town. Her parents, too, were by no means enthusiastic about either suitor.

When, however, Bertha's twenty-sixth birthday passed and her father lost his modest competency through a bankruptcy, it had been her lot to put up with belated reproaches on the score of all sorts of things which she herself had begun to forget — her youthful artistic ambitions, her love affair of long ago with the violinist, which had seemed likely to lead to nothing, and the lack of encouragement which the ugly doctor and the merchant from the country received at her hands.

At that time Victor Mathias Garlan was no longer resident in Vienna. Two years before, the insurance company, in which he had been employed since he had reached the age of twenty, had, at his own request,

transferred him, in the capacity of manager, to the recently-established branch in the little town on the Danube where his married brother carried on business as a wine merchant. In the course of a somewhat lengthy conversation which took place on the occasion of his farewell visit to Bertha's parents, and which created a certain impression upon her, he had mentioned that the principal reasons for his asking to be transferred to the little town were that he felt himself to be getting on in years, that he had no longer any idea of seeking a wife, and that he desired to have some sort of a home amongst people who were closely connected with him. At that time Bertha's parents had made fun of his notion, which seemed to them somewhat hypochondriacal, for Garlan was then scarcely forty years old. Bertha herself, however, had found a good deal of common sense in Garlan's reason, inasmuch as he had never appeared to her as, properly speaking, a young man.

In the course of the following years Garlan used often to come to Vienna on business, and never omitted to visit Bertha's family on such occasions. After supper it was Bertha's custom to play the piano for Garlan's entertainment, and he used to listen to her with an almost reverent attention, and would, perhaps, go on to talk of his little nephew and niece — who were both very musical — and to whom he would often speak of Fraulein Bertha as the finest pianiste he had ever heard.

It seemed strange, and Bertha's mother could not refrain from commenting now and again upon it, that, since his diffident wooing in the old days, Herr Garlan had not once ventured so much as to make the slightest further allusion to the past, or even to a possible future. And thus Bertha, in addition to the other reproaches to which she had to listen, incurred the blame for treating Herr Garlan with too great indifference, if not, indeed, with actual coldness. Bertha, however, only shook her head, for at that time she had not so much as contemplated the possibility of marrying this somewhat awkward man, who had grown old before his time.

After the sudden death of her mother, which happened at a time when her father had been lying ill for many months, Garlan reappeared upon the scene with the announcement that he had obtained a month's holiday — the only one for which he had ever applied. It was clearly evident to Bertha that his sole purpose in coming to Vienna was to be of help to her in that time of trouble and distress. And when Bertha's father died a week after the funeral of her mother, Garlan proved himself to be a true friend, and one, moreover, blessed with an amount of energy for which she had never given him credit. He prevailed on his sister-in-law to come to Vienna, so that she could help Bertha to tide over the first few weeks of her bereavement, besides, in some slight degree, distracting her thoughts. He settled the business affairs capably and quickly. His kindness of heart did much to cheer Bertha during those sad days, and when, on the expiration of his leave, he asked her whether she would be his wife she acquiesced with a feeling of the most profound gratitude. She was, of course, aware of the fact that if she did not marry him she would in a few months' time have to earn her own living, probably as a teacher, and, besides, she had come to appreciate Garlan and had become so used to his company that she was able, in all sincerity, to answer "Yes," both when he led her to the altar and subsequently when, as they set off for their honeymoon, he asked her, for the first time, if she loved him.

It was true that at the very outset of their married life she discovered that she felt no love for him. She just let him love her and put up with the fact, at first with a certain surprise at her own disillusionment and afterwards with indifference. It was not until she found that she was about to become a mother that she could bring herself to reciprocate his affection. She very soon grew accustomed to the quiet life of the little town, all the more easily because even in Vienna she had led a somewhat secluded existence. With her husband's family she felt quite happy and comfortable; her brother-in-law appeared to be a most genial and amiable person, if not altogether innocent of an occasional display of coarseness; his wife was good-natured, and inclined at times to be melancholy. Garlan's nephew, who was thirteen years old at the time of Bertha's

arrival at the little town, was a pert, good-looking boy; and his niece, a very sedate child of nine, with large, astonished eyes, conceived a strong attachment for Bertha from the very first moment that they met.

When Bertha's child was born, he was hailed by the children as a welcome plaything, and, for the next two years, Bertha felt completely happy. She even believed at times that it was impossible that her fate could have taken a more favourable shape. The noise and bustle of the great city came back to her memory as something unpleasant, almost hazardous; and on one occasion when she had accompanied her husband to Vienna, in order to make a few purchases and it so chanced, to her annoyance, that the streets were wet and muddy with the rain, she vowed never again to undertake that tedious and wholly unnecessary journey of three hours' duration. Her husband died suddenly one spring morning three years after their marriage. Bertha's consternation was extreme. She felt that she had never taken into consideration the mere possibility of such an event. She was left in very straitened circumstances. Soon, however, her sister-in-law, with thoughtful kindness, devised a means by which the widow could support herself without appearing to accept anything in the nature of charity. She asked Bertha to take over the musical education of her children, and also procured for her an engagement as music teacher to other families in the town. It was tacitly understood amongst the ladies who engaged her that they should always make it appear as if Bertha had undertaken these lessons only for the sake of a little distraction, and that they paid her for them only because they could not possibly allow her to devote so much time and trouble in that way without some return. What she earned from this source was quite sufficient to supplement her income to an amount adequate to meet the demands of her mode of living, and so, when time had deadened the first keen pangs and the subsequent sorrow occasioned by her husband's death, she was again quite contented and cheerful. Her life up to then had not been spent in such a way as to cause her now to feel the lack of anything. Such thoughts as she gave to the future were occupied by scarcely any other theme than her son in the successive stages of his growth, and it was only on rare occasions that the likelihood of marrying a second time crossed her mind, and then the idea was always a mere fleeting fancy, for as yet she had met no one whom she was able seriously to regard in the light of a possible second husband. The stirrings of youthful desires, which she sometimes felt within her in her waking morning hours, always vanished as the day pursued its even course. It was only since the advent of the spring that she had felt a certain disturbance of her previous sensation of well-being; no longer were her nights passed in the tranquil and dreamless sleep of heretofore, and at times she was oppressed by a sensation of tedium, such as she had never experienced before. Strangest of all, however, was the sudden access of lassitude which would often come over her even in the daytime, under the influence of which she fancied that she could trace the course of her blood as it circled through her body. She remembered that she had experienced a similar sensation in the days when she was emerging from childhood. At first this feeling, in spite of its familiarity, was yet so strange to her that it seemed as though one of her friends must have told her about it. It was only when it recurred with ever-increasing frequency that she realized that she herself had experienced it before.

She shuddered, with a feeling as though she were waking from sleep. She opened her eyes.

It seemed to her that the air was all a-whirl; the shadows had crept halfway across the road; away up on the hilltop the cemetery wall no longer gleamed in the sunlight. Bertha rapidly shook her head to and fro a few times as though to waken herself thoroughly. It seemed to her as if a whole day and a whole night had elapsed since she had sat down on the bench. How was it, then, that in her consciousness time passed in so disjointed a fashion? She looked around her. Where could Fritz have gone to? Oh, there he was behind her, playing with Doctor Friedrich's children. The nursemaid was on her knees beside them, helping them to build a castle with the sand.

The avenue was now less deserted than it had been earlier in the evening. Bertha knew almost all the people who passed; she saw them every day. As, however, most of them were not people to whom she was in the habit of talking, they flitted by like shadows. Yonder came the saddler, Peter Nowak, and his wife; Doctor Rellinger drove by in his little country trap and bowed to her as he passed; he was followed by the two daughters of Herr Wendelein, the landowner; presently Lieutenant Baier and his *fiancee* cycled slowly down the road on their way to the country. Then, again, there seemed to be a short lull in the movement before her and Bertha heard nothing but the laughter of the children as they played.

Then, again, she saw that some one was slowly approaching from the town, and she recognized who it was while he was still a long way off. It was Herr Klingemann, to whom of late she had been in the habit of talking more frequently than had previously been her custom. Some twelve years ago or more he had moved from Vienna to the little town. Gossip had it that he had at one time been a doctor, and had been obliged to give up his practice on account of some professional error, or even of some more serious lapse. Some, however, asserted that he had never qualified as a doctor at all, but, failing to pass his examinations, had finally given up the study of medicine. Herr Klingemann, for his own part, gave himself out to be a philosopher, who had grown weary of life in the great city after having enjoyed it to satiety, and for that reason had moved to the little town, where he could live comfortably on what remained of his fortune.

He was now but little more than five-and-forty. There were still times when he was of a genial enough aspect, but, for the most part, he had an extremely dilapidated and disagreeable appearance.

While yet some distance away he smiled at the young widow, but did not hasten his steps. Finally he stopped before her and gave her an ironical nod, which was his habitual manner of greeting people.

"Good evening, my pretty lady!" he said.

Bertha returned his salutation. It was one of those days on which Herr Klingemann appeared to make some claim to elegance and youthfulness. He was attired in a dark grey frock coat, so tightly fitting that he might almost have been wearing stays. On his head was a narrow brimmed brown straw hat with a black band. About his throat, moreover, there was a very tiny red cravat, set rather askew.

For a time he remained silent, tugging his slightly grizzled fair moustache upwards and downwards.

"I presume you have come from up there, my dear lady?" he said.

Without turning his head or even his eyes, he pointed his finger over his shoulder, in a somewhat contemptuous manner, in the direction of the cemetery behind him.

Throughout the town Herr Klingemann was known as a man to whom nothing was sacred, and as he stood before her, Bertha could not help thinking of the various bits of gossip that she had heard about him. It was well known that his relations with his cook, whom he always referred to as his housekeeper, were of a somewhat more intimate nature than that merely of master and servant, and his name was also mentioned in connexion with the wife of a tobacconist, who, as he had himself told Bertha with proud regret, deceived him with a captain of the regiment stationed in the town. Moreover, there were several eligible girls in the neighbourhood who cherished a certain tender interest in him.

Whenever these things were hinted at Herr Klingemann always made some sneering remark on the subject of marriage in general, which shocked the susceptibilities of many, but, on the whole, actually increased the amount of respect in which he was held.

"I have been out for a short walk," said Bertha.

"Alone?"

"Oh, no; with my boy."

"Yes — yes — of course, there he is! Good evening, my little mortal!" — he gazed away over Fritz's head

as he said this— “may I sit down for a moment beside you, Frau Bertha?”

He pronounced her name with an ironic inflection and, without waiting for her to reply, he sat down on the bench.

“I heard you playing the piano this morning,” he continued. “Do you know what kind of an impression it made upon me? This: that with you music must take the place of everything.”

He repeated the word “everything” and, at the same time, looked at Bertha in a manner which caused her to blush.

“What a pity I so seldom have the opportunity of hearing you play!” he went on. “If I don’t happen to be passing your open window when you are at the piano—”

Bertha noticed that he kept on edging nearer to her, and that his arm was touching hers. Involuntarily she moved away. Suddenly she felt herself seized from behind, her head pulled back over the bench and a hand clasped over her eyes.

For a moment she thought that it was Klingemann’s hand, which she felt upon her lids.

“Why, you must be mad, sir,” she cried.

“How funny it is to hear you call me ‘Sir,’ Aunt Bertha!” replied the laughing voice of a boy at her back.

“Well, do let me at least open my eyes, Richard,” said Bertha, trying to remove the boy’s hands from her face. “Have you come from home!” she added, turning round towards him.

“Yes, Aunt, and here’s the newspaper which I have brought you.”

Bertha took the paper which he handed to her and began to read it.

Klingemann, meanwhile, rose to his feet and turned to Richard.

“Have you done your exercises already?” he asked.

“We have no exercises at all now, Herr Klingemann, because our final examination is to take place in July.”

“So you will actually be a student by this time next year?”

“This time next year! It’ll be in the autumn!”

As he said this Richard drummed his fingers along the newspaper.

“What do you want, then, you ill-mannered fellow?” asked Bertha.

“I say, Aunt, will you come and visit me when I am in Vienna?”

“Yes, I should like to catch myself! I shall be glad to be rid of you!”

“Here comes Herr Rupius!” said Richard.

Bertha lowered the paper and looked in the direction indicated by her nephew’s glance. Along the avenue leading from the town a maidservant came, pushing an invalid’s chair, in which a man was sitting. His head was uncovered and his soft felt hat was lying upon his knees, from which a plaid rug reached down to his feet. His forehead was lofty; his hair smooth and fair and slightly grizzled at the temples; his feet were peculiarly large. As he passed the bench on which Bertha was seated he only inclined his head slightly, without smiling. Bertha knew that, had she been alone, he would certainly have stopped; moreover, he looked only at her as he passed by, and his greeting seemed to apply to her alone. It seemed to Bertha that she had never before seen such a grave look in his eyes as on this occasion, and she was exceedingly sorry, for she felt a profound compassion for the paralysed man.

When Herr Rupius had passed by, Klingemann said:

“Poor devil! And wifie is away as usual on one of her visits to
Vienna, eh?”

“No,” answered Bertha, almost angrily. “I was speaking to her only an hour ago.”

Klingemann was silent, for he felt that further remarks on the subject of the mysterious visits of Frau Rupius to Vienna might not have been in keeping with his own reputation as a freethinker.

“Won’t he really ever be able to walk again?” asked Richard.

“No,” said Bertha.

She knew this for a fact because Herr Rupius had told her so himself on one occasion when she had called on him and his wife was in Vienna.

At that moment Herr Rupius seemed to her to be a particularly pitiful figure, for, as he was being wheeled past her in his invalid’s chair, she had, in reading the paper, lighted upon the name of one whom she regarded as a happy man.

Mechanically she read the paragraph again.

“Our celebrated compatriot Emil Lindbach returned to Vienna a few days ago after his professional tour through France and Spain, in the course of which he met with many a triumphant reception. In Madrid this distinguished artist had the honour of playing before the Queen of Spain. On the 24th of this month Herr Lindbach will take part in the charity concert which has been organized for the relief of the inhabitants of Vorarlberg, who have suffered such severe losses as a result of the recent floods. A keen interest in the concert is being shown by the public in spite of the fact that the season is so far advanced.”

Emil Lindbach! It required a certain effort on Bertha’s part to realize that this was the same man whom she had loved — how many? — twelve years ago. Twelve years! She could feel the hot blood mount up into her brow. It seemed to her as though she ought to be ashamed of having gradually grown older.

The sun had set. Bertha took Fritz by the hand, bade the others good evening, and walked slowly homewards.

She lived on the first floor of a house in a new street. From her windows she had a view of the hill, and opposite were only vacant sites.

Bertha handed Fritz over to the care of the maid, sat down by the window, took up the paper and began to read again. She had kept the custom of glancing through the art news first of all. This habit had been formed in the days of her early childhood, when she and her brother, who was now an actor, used to go to the top gallery of the Burg-Theater together. Her interest in art naturally grew when she attended the conservatoire of music; in those days she had been acquainted with the names of even the minor actors, singers and pianists. Later on, when her frequent visits to the theatres, the studies at the conservatoire and her own artistic aspirations came to an end, there still lingered within her a kind of sympathy, which was not free from the touch of homesickness, towards that joyous world of art. But during the latter portion of her life in Vienna all these things had retained scarcely any of their former significance for her; just as little, indeed, as they had possessed since she had come to reside in the little town, where occasional amateur concerts were the best that was offered in the way of artistic enjoyment. One evening during the first year of her married life, she had taken part in one of these concerts at the “Red Apple” Hotel. She had played two marches by Schubert as a duet with another young lady in the town. On that occasion her agitation had been so great that she had vowed to herself never again to appear in public, and was more than glad that she had given up her hopes of an artistic career.

For such a career a very different temperament from hers was necessary — for example, one like Emil Lindbach’s. Yes, he was born to it! She had recognized that by his demeanour the very moment when she had first seen him step on to the dais at a school concert. He had smoothed back his hair in an unaffected manner, gazed at the people below with sardonic superiority, and had acknowledged the first applause which he had

ever received in the calm, indifferent manner of one long accustomed to such things.

It was strange, but whenever she thought of Emil Lindbach she still saw him in her mind's eye as youthful, even boyish, just as he had been in the days when they had known and loved each other. Yet not so long before, when she had spent the evening with her brother-in-law and his wife in a restaurant, she had seen a photograph of him in an illustrated paper, and he appeared to have changed greatly. He no longer wore his hair long; his black moustache was curled downwards; his collar was conspicuously tall, and his cravat twisted in accordance with the fashion of the day. Her sister-in-law had given her opinion that he looked like a Polish count.

Bertha took up the newspaper again and was about to read on, but by that time it was too dark. She rose to her feet and called the maid. The lamp was brought in and the table laid for supper. Bertha ate her meal with Fritz, the window remaining open. That evening she felt an even greater tenderness for her child than usual; she recalled once more to memory the times when her husband was still alive, and all manner of reminiscences passed rapidly through her mind. While she was putting Fritz to bed, her glance lingered for quite a long time on her husband's portrait, which hung over the bed in an oval frame of dark brown wood. It was a full-length portrait; he was wearing a morning coat and a white cravat, and was holding his tall hat in his hand. It was all in memory of their wedding day.

Bertha knew for a certainty, at that moment, that Herr Klingemann would have smiled sarcastically had he seen that portrait.

Later in the evening she sat down at the piano, as was a not infrequent custom of hers before going to bed, not so much because of her enthusiasm for music, but because she did not want to retire to rest too early. On such occasions she played, for the most part, the few pieces which she still knew by heart — mazurkas by Chopin, some passages from one of Beethoven's sonatas, or the Kreisleriana. Sometimes she improvised as well, but never pursued the theme beyond a succession of chords, which, indeed, were always the same.

On that evening she began at once by striking those chords, somewhat more softly than usual; then she essayed various modulations and, as she made the last triad resound for a long time by means of the pedal — her hands were now lying in her lap — she felt a gentle joy in the melodies which were hovering, as it were, about her. Then Klingemann's observation recurred to her.

"With you music must take the place of everything!"

Indeed he had not been far from the truth. Music certainly had to take the place of much.

But everything —? Oh, no!

What was that? Footsteps over the way….

Well, there was nothing remarkable in that. But they were slow, regular footsteps, as though somebody was passing up and down. She stood up and went to the window. It was quite dark, and at first she could not recognize the man who was walking outside. But she knew that it was Klingemann. How absurd! Was he going to haunt the vicinity like a love-sick swain?

"Good evening, Frau Bertha," he said from across the road, and she could see in the darkness that he raised his hat.

"Good evening," she answered, almost confusedly.

"You were playing most beautifully."

Her only answer was to murmur "really?" and that perhaps did not reach his ears.

He remained standing for a moment, then said:

"Good night, sleep soundly, Frau Bertha."

He pronounced the word "sleep" with an emphasis which was almost insolent.

“Now he is going home to his cook!” thought Bertha to herself.

Then suddenly she called to mind something which she had known for quite a long time, but to which she had not given a thought since it had come to her knowledge. It was rumoured that in his room there hung a picture which was always covered with a little curtain because its subject was of a somewhat questionable nature.

Who was it had told her about that picture? Oh, yes, Frau Rupius had told her when they were taking a walk along the bank of the Danube one day last autumn, and she in her turn had heard of it from some one else — Bertha could not remember from whom.

What an odious man! Bertha felt that somehow she was guilty of a slight depravity in thinking of him and all these things. She continued to stand by the window. It seemed to her as though it had been an unpleasant day. She went over the actual events in her mind, and was astonished to find that, after all, the day had just been like many hundreds before it and many, many more that were yet to come.

II



THEY STOOD UP from the table. It had been one of those little Sunday dinner parties which the wine merchant Garlan was in the habit of occasionally giving his acquaintances. The host came up to his sister-in-law and caught her round the waist, which was one of his customs on an afternoon.

She knew beforehand what he wanted. Whenever he had company Bertha had to play the piano after dinner, and often duets with Richard. The music served as a pleasant introduction to a game of cards, or, indeed, chimed in pleasantly with the game.

She sat down at the piano. In the meantime the door of the smoking-room was opened; Garlan, Doctor Friedrich and Herr Martin took their seats at a small baize-covered table and began to play. The wives of the three gentlemen remained in the drawing-room, and Frau Martin lit a cigarette, sat down on the sofa and crossed her legs — on Sundays she always wore dress shoes and black silk stockings. Doctor Friedrich's wife looked at Frau Martin's feet as though fixed to the spot by enchantment. Richard had followed the gentlemen — he already took an interest in a game of taroc. Elly stood with her elbows leaning on the piano waiting for Bertha to begin to play. The hostess went in and out of the room; she was perpetually giving orders in the kitchen, and rattling the bunch of keys which she carried in her hand. Once as she came into the room Doctor Friedrich's wife threw her a glance which seemed to say: "Just look how Frau Martin is sitting there!"

Bertha noticed all those things that day more clearly, as it were, than usual, somewhat after the manner in which things are seen by a person suffering from fever. She had not as yet struck a note. Then her brother-in-law turned towards her and threw her a glance, which was intended to remind her of her duty. She began to play a march by Schubert, with a very heavy touch.

"Softer," said her brother-in-law, turning round again.

"Taroc with a musical accompaniment is a speciality of this house," said
Doctor Friedrich.

"Songs without words, so to speak," added Herr Martin.

The others laughed. Garlan turned round towards Bertha again, for she had suddenly left off playing.

"I have a slight headache," she said, as if it were necessary to make some excuse; immediately, however, she felt as though it were beneath her dignity to say that, and she added: "I don't feel any inclination to play."

Everybody looked at her, feeling that something rather out of the common was happening.

"Won't you come and sit by us, Bertha?" said Frau Garlan.

Elly had a vague idea that she ought to show her affection for her aunt, and hung on her arm; and the two of them stood side by side, leaning against the piano.

"Are you going with us to the 'Red Apple' this evening?" Frau Martin asked of her hostess.

"No, I don't think so."

"Ah," broke in Herr Garlan, "if we must forgo our concert this afternoon we will have one in the evening instead — your lead, Doctor."

"The military concert?" asked Doctor Friedrich's wife.

Frau Garlan rose to her feet.

"Do you really mean to go to the 'Red Apple' this evening?" she asked her husband.

"Certainly."

"Very well," she answered, somewhat flustered, and at once went off to the kitchen again to make fresh arrangements.

"Richard," said Garlan to his son; "you might make haste and run over and tell the manager to have a table reserved for us in the garden."

Richard hurried off, colliding in the doorway with his mother, who was just coming into the room. She sank down on the sofa as though exhausted.

"You can't believe," she said to Doctor Friedrich's wife; "how difficult it is to make Brigitta understand the simplest thing."

Frau Martin had gone and sat down beside her husband, at the same time throwing a glance towards Bertha, who was still standing silently with Elly beside the piano. Frau Martin stroked her husband's hair, laid her hand on his knee and seemed to feel that she was under the necessity of showing the company how happy she was.

"I'll tell you what. Aunt," said Elly suddenly to Bertha; "let's go into the garden for a while. The fresh air will drive your headache away."

They went down the steps into the courtyard, in the centre of which a small lawn had been laid out. At the back, it was shut off by a wall, against which stood a few shrubs and a couple of young trees, which still had to be propped up by stakes. Away over the wall only the blue sky was to be seen; in boisterous weather the rush of the river which flowed close by could be heard. Two wicker garden chairs stood with their backs against the wall, and in front of them was a small table. Bertha and Elly sat down, Elly still keeping her arm linked in her aunt's.

"Tell you what, Elly?"

"See, I am quite a big girl now; do tell me about him."

Bertha was somewhat alarmed, for it struck her at once that her niece's question did not refer to her dead husband, but to some one else. And suddenly she saw before her mind's eye the picture of Emil Lindbach, just as she had seen it in the illustrated paper; but immediately both the vision and her slight alarm vanished, and she felt a kind of emotion at the shy question of the young girl who believed that she still grieved for her dead husband, and that it would comfort her to have an opportunity for talking about him.

"May I come down and join you, or are you telling each other secrets?"

Richard's voice came at that moment from a window overlooking the courtyard. For the first time Bertha was struck by the resemblance he bore to Emil Lindbach. She realized, however, that it might perhaps only be the youthfulness of his manner and his rather long hair that put her in mind of Emil. Richard was now nearly as old as Emil had been in the days of her studies at the conservatoire.

"I've reserved a table," he said as he came into the courtyard. "Are you coming with us, Aunt Bertha?"

He sat down on the back of her chair, stroked her cheeks, and said in his fresh, yet rather affected, way:

"You will come, won't you, pretty Aunt, for my sake?"

Mechanically Bertha closed her eyes. A feeling of comfort stole over her, as if some childish hand, as if the little fingers of her own Fritz, were caressing her cheeks. Soon, however, she felt that some other memory as well rose up in her mind. She could not help thinking of a walk in the town park which she had taken one evening with Emil after her lesson at the conservatoire. On that occasion he had sat down to rest beside her on a seat, and had touched her cheeks with tender fingers. Was it only once that that had happened? No — much oftener! Indeed, they had sat on that seat ten or twenty times, and he had stroked her cheeks. How strange it was that all these things should come back to her thoughts now!

She would certainly never have thought of those walks again had not Richard by chance — but how long was she going to put up with his stroking her cheek?

"Richard!" she exclaimed, opening her eyes.

She saw that he was smiling in such a way that she thought that he must have divined what was passing through her mind. Of course, it was quite impossible, because, as a matter of fact, scarcely anybody in the town was aware that she was acquainted with Emil Lindbach, the great violinist. If it came to that, was she really acquainted with him still? It was indeed a very different person from Emil as he must now be that she had in mind — a handsome youth whom she had loved in the days of her early girlhood.

Thus her thoughts strayed further and further back into the past, and it seemed altogether impossible for her to return to the present and chatter with the two children.

She bade them good-bye and went away.

The afternoon sun lay brooding heavily upon the streets of the little town. The shops were shut, the pavements almost deserted. A few officers were sitting at a little table in front of the restaurant in the market square. Bertha glanced up at the windows of the first story of the house in which Herr and Frau Rupius lived. It was quite a long time since she had been to see them. She clearly remembered the last occasion — it was the day after Christmas. It was then that she had found Herr Rupius alone and that he had told her that his affliction was incurable. She also remembered distinctly why she had not called upon him since that day: although she did not admit it to herself, she had a kind of fear of entering that house which she had then left with her mind in a state of violent agitation.

On the present occasion, however, she felt that she must go up; it seemed as though in the course of the last few days a kind of bond had been established between her and the paralysed man, and as though even the glance with which he had silently greeted her on the previous day, when she was out walking, had had some significance.

When she entered the room her eyes had, first of all, to become accustomed to the dimness of the light; the blinds were drawn and a sunbeam poured in only through the chink at the top, and fell in front of the white stove. Herr Rupius was sitting in an armchair at the table in the centre of the room. Before him lay stacks of prints, and he was just in the act of picking up one in order to look at the one beneath it. Bertha could see that they were engravings.

"Thank you for coming to see me once again," he said, stretching out his hand to her. "You see what it is I am busy on just now? Well, it is a collection of engravings after the old Dutch masters. Believe me, my dear lady, it is a great pleasure to examine old engravings."

"Oh, it is, indeed."

"See, there are six volumes, or rather six portfolios, each containing twenty prints. It will probably take me the whole summer to become thoroughly acquainted with them."

Bertha stood by his side and looked at the engraving immediately before him. It was a market scene by Teniers.

"The whole summer," she said absent-mindedly.

Rupius turned towards her.

"Yes, indeed," he said, his jaw slightly set, as though it was a matter of vindicating his point of view; "what I call being thoroughly acquainted with a picture. By that I mean: being able, so to speak, to reproduce it in my mind, line for line. This one here is a Teniers — the original is in one of the galleries at The Hague. Why don't you go to The Hague, where so many splendid examples of the art of Teniers and so many other styles of painting are to be seen, my dear lady?"

Bertha smiled.

"How can I think of making such a journey as that?"

"Yes, yes, of course, that's so," said Herr Rupius; "The Hague is a very beautiful town. I was there fourteen years ago. At that time I was twenty-eight, I am now forty-two — or, I might say, eighty-four" — he picked up the print and laid it aside— "here we have an Ostade— 'The Pipe Smoker.' Quite so, you can see easily enough that he is smoking a pipe. 'Original in Vienna.'"

"I think I remember that picture."

"Won't you come and sit opposite to me, Frau Bertha, or here beside me, if you would care to look at the pictures with me? Now we come to a Falkenborg — wonderful, isn't it? In the extreme foreground, though, it seems so void, so cramped. Yes, nothing but a peasant lad dancing with a girl, and there's an old woman who is cross about it, and here is a house out of the door of which someone is coming with a pail of water. Yes, that is all — a mere nothing of course, but there in the background you see, is the whole world, blue mountains, green towns, the clouded sky above, and near it a tourney — ha! ha! — in a certain sense perhaps it is out of place, but, on the other hand, in a certain sense it may be said to be appropriate. Since everything has a background and it is therefore perfectly right that here, directly behind the peasant's house, the world should begin with its tourneys, and its mountains, its rivers, its fortresses, its vineyards and its forests."

He pointed out the various parts of the picture to which he was referring with a little ivory paper-knife.

"Do you like it?" he continued. "The original also hangs in the Gallery in Vienna. You must have seen it."

"Oh, but it is now six years since I lived in Vienna, and for many years before that I had not paid a visit to the museum."

"Indeed? I have often walked round the galleries there, and stood before this picture, too. Yes, in those earlier days I *walked*."

He was almost laughing as he looked at her, and; her embarrassment was such that she could not make any reply.

"I fear I am boring you with the pictures," Herr Rupius went on abruptly. "Wait a little; my wife will be home soon. You know, I suppose, that she always goes for a two hours walk after dinner now. She is afraid of becoming too stout."

"Your wife looks as young and slender as … well, I don't think she has altered in the very least since I have come to live here."

Bertha felt as though Rupius' countenance had grown quite rigid. Then suddenly he said, in a gentle tone of voice which was not by any means in keeping with the expression of his face:

"A quiet life in a little town such as this keeps me young, of course. It was a clever idea of mine and hers, for it occurred simultaneously to both of us, to move here. Who can say whether, had we stayed in Vienna, it might not have been all over already?"

Bertha could not guess what he meant by the expression "all over"; whether he was referring to his own life, to his wife's youthfulness, or to something else. In any case, she was sorry that she had called that day; a feeling of shame at being so strong and well herself came over her.

"Did I tell you," continued Rupius, "that it was Anna who got these portfolios for me? It was a chance bargain, for the work is usually very expensive. A bookseller had advertised it and Anna telegraphed at once to her brother to procure it for us. You know, of course, that we have many relations in Vienna, both Anna and myself. Sometimes, too, she goes there to visit them. Soon after they pay us a return visit. I should be very glad indeed to see them again, especially Anna's brother and his wife, I owe them a great deal of gratitude. When Anna is in Vienna, she dines and sleeps at their house — but, of course, you already know all

that, Frau Bertha."

He spoke rapidly and, at the same time, in a cool, businesslike tone. It sounded as though he had made up his mind to tell the same things to every one who should enter the room that day. It was the first time that he had as much as spoken to Bertha of the journeys of his wife to Vienna.

"She is going again to-morrow," he continued; "I believe the matter in hand this time is her summer costume."

"I think that is a very clever notion of your wife," said Bertha, glad to have found an opening for conversation.

"It is cheaper, at the same time," added Herr Rupius. "Yes, I assure you it is cheaper even if you throw in the cost of the journey. Why don't you follow my wife's example?"

"In that way, Herr Rupius?"

"Why, in regard to your frocks and hats! You are young and pretty, too!"

"Heavens above! On whose account should I dress smartly?"

"On whose account! On whose account is it that my wife dresses so smartly?"

The door opened and Frau Rupius entered in a bright spring costume, a red sunshade in her hand and a white straw hat, trimmed with red ribbon, on her dark hair, which was dressed high. A pleasant smile was hovering around her lips, as usual, and she greeted Bertha with a quiet cheerfulness.

"Are you making an appearance in our house once more?" she said, handing her sunshade and hat to the maid, who had followed her into the room.

"Are you also interested in pictures, Frau Garlan?"

She went up close behind her husband and softly passed her hand over his forehead and hair.

"I was just telling Frau Garlan," said Rupius, "how surprised I am that she never goes to Vienna."

"Indeed," Frau Rupius put in; "why don't you do so? Moreover, you must certainly have some acquaintances there, too. Come with me one day — to-morrow, for example. Yes, to-morrow."

Rupius gazed straight before him while his wife said this, as though he did not dare to look at her.

"You are really very kind, Frau Rupius," said Bertha, feeling as though a perfect stream of joy was coursing through her being.

She wondered, too, how it was that all this time the possibility of making such a journey had not once entered her mind, the more so as it could be accomplished with so little trouble. It appeared to her at that moment that such a journey might be a remedy for the strange sense of dissatisfaction under which she had been suffering during the past few days.

"Well, do you agree, Frau Garlan?"

"I don't really know — I daresay I could spare the time, for I have only one lesson to give tomorrow at my sister-in-law's, and she, of course, won't be too exacting; but wouldn't I be putting you to some inconvenience?"

A slight shadow flitted across Frau Rupius' brow.

"Putting me to inconvenience! Whatever are you dreaming of! I shall be very glad to have pleasant company during the few hours of the journey there and back. And in Vienna — oh, we shall be sure to have much to do together in Vienna."

"Your husband," said Bertha, blushing like a girl who is speaking of her first ball, "has told me … has advised me …"

"Surely, he has been raving to you about my dressmaker," said Frau

Rupius, laughing.

Rupius still sat motionless in his chair and looked at neither of them.

"Yes, I should really like to ask you about her, Frau Rupius. When I see you I feel as if I should like to be well dressed again, just as you are."

"That is easily arranged," said Frau Rupius. "I will take you to my dressmaker, and by so doing I hope also to have the pleasure of your company on my subsequent visits. I am glad for your sake as well," she said to her husband, touching his hand which was lying on the table. Then she turned to Bertha and added: "and for yours. You will see how much good it will do you. Wandering about the streets without being known to a soul has a wonderful effect on one's spirits. I do it from time to time, and I always come back quite refreshed and—" in saying this she threw a sidelong glance, full of anxiety and tenderness, in the direction of her husband— "and then I am as happy here as ever it is possible to be; happier, I believe, than any other woman in the world."

She drew near her husband and kissed him on the temple. Bertha heard her say in a soft voice, as she did so:

"Dearest!"

Rupius, however, continued to stare before him as though he shrank from meeting his wife's glance.

Both were silent and seemed to be absorbed in themselves, as though Bertha was not in the room. Bertha comprehended vaguely that there was some mysterious factor in the relations of these two people, but what that factor was she was not clever, or not experienced, or not good enough to understand. For a whole minute the silence continued, and Bertha was so embarrassed that she would gladly have gone away had it not been necessary to arrange with Frau Rupius the details of the morrow's journey.

Anna was the first to speak.

"So then it is agreed that we are to meet at the railway station in time for the morning train — isn't it? And I will arrange matters so that we return home by the seven o'clock train in the evening. In eight hours, you see, it is possible to get through a good deal."

"Certainly," said Bertha; "provided, of course, that you are not inconveniencing yourself on my account in the slightest degree."

Anna interrupted her, almost angrily.

"I have already told you how glad I am that you will be travelling with me, the more so as there is not a woman in the town so congenial to me as you."

"Yes," said Herr Rupius, "I can corroborate that. You know, of course, that my wife is on visiting terms with hardly anybody here — and as it has been such a long time since you came to see us I was beginning to fear that she was going to lose you as well."

"However could you have thought such a thing? My dear Herr Rupius! And you, Frau Rupius, surely you haven't believed—"

At that moment Bertha felt an overwhelming love for both of them. Her emotion was such that she detected her voice to be assuming an almost tearful tone.

Frau Rupius smiled, a strange, deliberate smile.

"I haven't believed anything. As a matter of fact there are some things over which I do not generally ponder for long. I have no great need of friends, but you, Frau Bertha, I really and truly love."

She stretched out her hand to her. Bertha cast a glance at Rupius. It seemed to her that an expression of contentment should now be observable on his features. To her amazement, however, she saw that he was

gazing into the corner of the room with an almost terrified look in his eyes.

The parlourmaid came in with some coffee. Further particulars as to their plans for the morrow were discussed, and finally they drew up a tolerably exact time-table which, to Frau Rupius' slight amusement, Bertha entered in a little notebook.

When Bertha reached the street again, the sky had become overcast, and the increasing sultriness foretold the approach of a thunderstorm. The first large drops were falling before she reached home, and she was somewhat alarmed when, on going upstairs, she failed to find the servant and little Fritz. As she went up to the window, however, in order to shut it, she saw the two come running along. The first thunderclap crashed out, and she started back in terror. Then immediately came a brilliant flash of lightning.

The storm was brief, but unusually violent. Bertha went and sat on her bed, held Fritz on her lap, and told him a story, so that he should not be frightened. But, at the same time, she felt as though there was a certain connexion between her experiences of the past two days and the thunderstorm.

In half an hour all was over. Bertha opened the window; the air was now fresh, the darkening sky was clear and distant. Bertha drew a deep breath, and a feeling of peace and hope seemed to permeate her being.

It was time to get ready for the concert in the gardens. On her arrival she found her friends already gathered at a large table beneath a tree. It was Bertha's intention to tell her sister-in-law at once about her proposed visit to Vienna on the morrow, but a sense of shyness, as though there was something underhand in the journey, caused her to refrain.

Herr Klingemann went by with his housekeeper towards their table. The housekeeper was getting on towards middle-age; she was a very voluptuous looking woman, taller than Klingemann, and, when she walked, always appeared to be asleep. Klingemann bowed towards them with exaggerated politeness. The gentlemen scarcely acknowledged the salutation, and the ladies pretended not to have noticed it. Only Bertha nodded slightly and gazed after the couple.

"That is his sweetheart — yes, I know it for a positive fact," whispered
Richard, who was sitting near his aunt.

Herr Garlan's party ate, drank and applauded. At times various acquaintances came over from other tables, sat down with them for awhile, and then went away again to their places. The music murmured around Bertha without making any impression on her. Her mind was continuously occupied with the question as to how to inform them of her project.

Suddenly, while the music was playing very loudly, she said to Richard:

"I say, I won't be able to give you a music lesson to-morrow. I am going to Vienna."

"To Vienna!" exclaimed Richard; then he called across to his mother; "I say, Aunt Bertha is going to Vienna to-morrow!"

"Who's going to Vienna?" asked Garlan, who was sitting furthest away.

"I am," answered Bertha.

"What's this! What's this!" said Garlan, playfully threatening her with his finger.

So, then, it was accomplished. Bertha was glad. Richard made jokes about the people who were sitting in the garden, also about the fat bandmaster who was always skipping about while he was conducting, and then about the trumpet-player whose cheeks bulged out and who seemed to be shedding tears when he blew into his instrument. Bertha could not help laughing very heartily. Jests were bandied about her high spirits and Doctor Friedrich remarked that she must surely be going to some rendezvous at Vienna.

“I should like to put a stop to that, though!” exclaimed Richard, so angrily that the hilarity became general. Only Elly remained serious, and gazed at her aunt in downright astonishment.

III



BERTHA LOOKED OUT through the open carriage window upon the landscape: Frau Rupius read a book, which she had taken out of her little traveling-bag very soon after the train had started. It almost appeared as though she wished to avoid any lengthy conversation with Bertha, and the latter felt somewhat hurt. For a long time past she had been cherishing a wish to be a friend of Frau Rupius, but since the previous day this desire of hers had become almost a yearning, which recalled to her mind the whole-hearted devotion of the friendships of the days of her childhood.

At first, therefore, she had felt quite unhappy, and had a sensation of having been abandoned, but soon the changing panorama to be seen through the window began to distract her thoughts in an agreeable manner. As she looked at the rails which seemed to run to meet her, at the hedges and telegraph poles which glided and leaped past her, she recalled to mind the few short journeys to the Salzkammergut, where she had been taken, when a child, by her parents, and the indescribable pleasure of having been allowed to occupy a corner seat on those occasions. Then she looked into the distance and exulted in the gleaming of the river, in the pleasant windings of the hills and meadows, in the azure of the sky and in the white clouds.

After a time Anna laid down the book, and began to chat to Bertha and smiled at her, as though at a child.

"Who would have foretold this of us?" said Frau Rupius.

"That we should be going to Vienna together?"

"No, no, I mean that we shall both — how shall I express it? — pass or end our lives yonder" — she gave a slight nod in the direction of the place from which they came.

"Very true, indeed!" answered Bertha, who had not yet considered whether there was anything really strange in the fact or not.

"Well, you, of course, knew it the moment you were married, but I—"

Frau Rupius gazed straight before her.

"So then your move to the little town," said Bertha, "did not take place until — until—"

She broke off in confusion.

"Yes, you know that, of course."

In saying this Frau Rupius looked Bertha full in the face as if reproaching her for her question. But when she continued to speak she smiled gently, as though her thoughts were not occupied by anything so sad.

"Yes, I never imagined that I should leave Vienna; my husband had his position as a government official, and indeed he would certainly have been able to remain longer there, in spite of his infirmity, had he not wanted to go away at once."

"He thought, perhaps, that the fresh air, the quiet—" began Bertha, and she at once perceived that she was not saying anything very sensible.

Nevertheless Anna answered her quite affably.

"Oh, no, neither rest nor climate could do him any good, but he thought that it would be better for both of us in every way. He was right, too — what should we have been able to do if we had remained in the city?"

Bertha felt that Anna was not telling her the whole story and she would have liked to beg her not to hesitate, but to open her whole heart to her. She knew, however, that she was not clever enough to express such a request in the right words. Then, as though Frau Rupius had guessed that Bertha was anxious to learn more, she quickly changed the subject of their conversation. She asked Bertha about her brother-in-law, the

musical talent of her pupils, and her method of teaching; then she took up the novel again and left Bertha to herself.

Once she looked up from the book and said:

"You haven't brought anything with you to read, then?"

"Oh, yes," answered Bertha.

She suddenly remembered that she had bought a newspaper; she took it up and turned over the pages assiduously. The train drew near to Vienna. Frau Rupius closed her book and put it in the travelling-bag. She looked at Bertha with a certain tenderness, as at a child who must soon be sent away alone to meet an uncertain destiny.

"Another quarter of an hour," she remarked; "and we shall be — well, I very nearly said, home."

Before them lay the town. On the far side of the river chimneys towered up aloft, rows of tall yellow painted houses stretched away into the distance, and steeples ascended skywards. Everything lay basking in the gentle sunlight of May.

Bertha's heart throbbed. She experienced a sensation such as might come over a traveller returning after a long absence to a longed-for home, which had probably altered greatly in the meantime, and where surprises and mysteries of all kinds awaited him. At the moment when the train rolled into the station she seemed almost courageous in her own eyes.

Frau Rupius took a carriage, and they drove into the town. As they passed the Ring, Bertha suddenly leaned out of the window and gazed after a young man whose figure and walk reminded her of Emil Lindbach. She wished that the young man would turn round, but she lost sight of him without his having done so.

The carriage stopped before a house in the Kohlmarkt. The two ladies got out and made their way to the third floor, where the dressmaker's workroom was situated. While Frau Rupius tried on her new costume, Bertha had various materials displayed to her from which she made a choice. The assistant took her measure, and it was arranged that Bertha should call in a week's time to be fitted. Frau Rupius came out from the adjoining room and recommended that particular care should be given to her friend's order.

It seemed to Bertha that everybody was looking at her in a rather disparaging, almost compassionate manner, and, on looking at herself in the large pier glass she suddenly perceived that she was very tastelessly dressed. What on earth had put it into her head to attire herself on this occasion in the provincial Sunday-best, instead of in one of the simple plain dresses she usually wore? She grew crimson with shame. She had on a black and white striped foulard costume, which was three years out of date, so far as its cut was concerned, and a bright-coloured hat, trimmed with roses and turned up at an extravagant angle in front, which seemed to weigh heavily upon her dainty figure and made her appear almost ridiculous.

Then, as if her own conviction needed further confirmation by some word of consolation, Frau Rupius said, as they went down the stairs:

"You are looking lovely!"

They stood in the doorway.

"What shall be done now?" asked Frau Rupius. "What do you propose?"

"Will you then … I … I mean …"

Bertha was quite frightened; she felt as though she was being turned adrift.

Frau Rupius looked at her with kindly commiseration.

"I think," she said, "that you are going to pay a visit to your cousin now, are you not? I suppose that you will be asked to stay to dinner."

“Agatha will be sure to invite me to dine with her.”

“I will accompany you as far as your cousin’s, if you would like me to; then I will go to my brother and, if possible, I will call for you at three in the afternoon.”

Together they walked through the most crowded streets of the central part of the town and looked at the shop windows. At first Bertha found the din somewhat confusing; afterwards, however, she found it more pleasant than otherwise. She gazed at the passers-by and took great pleasure in watching the well-groomed men and smartly-attired ladies. Almost all the people seemed to be wearing new clothes, and it seemed to her they all looked much happier than the people at home.

Presently she stopped before the window of a picture-dealer’s shop and immediately her eyes fell on a familiar portrait; it was the same one of Emil Lindbach as had appeared in the illustrated paper, Bertha was as delighted as if she had met an acquaintance.

“I know that man,” she said to Frau Rupius.

“Whom?”

“That man there” — she pointed with her finger at the photograph— “what do you think? I used to attend the conservatoire at the same time he did!”

“Really?” said Frau Rupius.

Bertha looked at her and observed that she had not paid the slightest attention to the portrait, but was thinking of something else. Bertha, however, was glad of that, for it seemed to her that there had been too much warmth lurking in her voice.

All at once a gentle thrill of pride stirred within her at the thought that the man whose portrait hung there in the shop window had been in love with her in the days of his youth, and had kissed her. She walked on with a sensation of inward contentment. After a short time they reached her cousin’s house on the Riemerstrasse.

“So it’s settled then,” she said; “you will call for me at three o’clock, won’t you?”

“Yes,” replied Frau Rupius; “that is to say — but if I should be a little late, do not on any account wait for me at your cousin’s any longer than you want to. In any case, this much is settled: we will both be at the railway station at seven o’clock this evening. Good-bye for the present.”

She shook hands with Bertha and hurried away.

Bertha gazed after her in surprise. Once more she felt forlorn, just as she had done in the train when Frau Rupius had read the novel.

Then she went up the two flights of stairs. She had not sent her cousin word as to her visit, and she was a little afraid that her arrival might be somewhat inopportune. She had not seen Agatha for many years, and they had exchanged letters only at very rare intervals.

Agatha received her without either surprise or cordiality, as though it was only the day before that they had seen each other for the last time. A smile had been playing around Bertha’s lips — the smile of those who think that they are about to give some one else a surprise — she repressed it immediately.

“Well, you are not a very frequent visitor, I must say!” said Agatha, “and you never let us have a word from you.”

“But, Agatha, you know it was your turn to write; you have been owing me a letter these last three months.”

“Really!” replied Agatha. “Well, you’ll have to excuse me; you can imagine what a lot of work three children mean. Did I write and tell you that Georg goes to school now?”

Agatha took her cousin into the nursery, where Georg and his two little sisters were just having their

dinner given them by the nursery-governess. Bertha asked them a few questions, but the children were very shy, and the younger girl actually began to cry.

"Do beg Aunt Bertha to bring Fritz with her next time she comes," said
Agatha to Georg at length.

It struck Bertha how greatly her cousin had aged during the last few years. Indeed, when she bent down to the children Agatha appeared almost like an old woman; and yet she was only a year older than Bertha, as the latter knew.

By the time they had returned to the dining-room they had already told each other all that they had to say, and when Agatha invited Bertha to stay to dinner, it seemed that she spoke only for the mere sake of making some remark. Bertha accepted the invitation, nevertheless, and her cousin went into the kitchen to give some orders.

Bertha gazed around the room, which was furnished economically and in bad taste. It was very dark, for the street was extremely narrow. She took up an album which was lying on the table. She found hardly any but familiar faces in it. At the very beginning were the portraits of Agatha's parents, who had died long ago; then came those of her own parents and of her brothers, of whom she scarcely ever heard; portraits of friends whom they both had known in earlier days, and of whom she now knew hardly anything; and, finally, there was a photograph, the existence of which she had long forgotten. It was one of herself and Agatha together, and had been taken when they were quite young girls. In those days they had been very much alike in appearance, and had been great friends. Bertha could remember many of the confidential chats which they had had together in the days of their girlhood.

And that lovely creature there with the looped plaits was now almost an old woman! And what of herself? What reason had she, then, for still looking upon herself as a young woman? Did she not, perhaps, appear to others as old as Agatha had seemed to her? She resolved that, in the afternoon, she would take notice of the glances which passers-by bestowed upon her. It would be terrible if she really did look as old as her cousin! No, the idea was utterly ridiculous! She called to mind how her nephew, Richard always called her his "pretty aunt," how Klingemann had walked to and fro outside her window the other evening — and even the recollection of her brother-in-law's attentions reassured her. And, when she looked in the mirror which was hanging opposite to her, she saw two bright eyes gazing at her from a smooth, fresh face — they were her face and her eyes.

When Agatha came into the room again Bertha began to talk of the far-away years of their childhood, but it seemed that Agatha had forgotten all about those early days, as though marriage, motherhood and week-day cares had obliterated both youth and its memories. When Bertha went on to speak of a students' dance they had both attended, of the young men who had courted Agatha, and of a bouquet which some unknown lover had once sent her, Agatha at first smiled rather absent-mindedly, then she looked at Bertha and said:

"Just fancy you still remembering all those foolish things!"

Agatha's husband came home from his Government office. He had grown very grey since Bertha had last seen him. At first sight he did not appear to recognize Bertha, then he mistook her for another lady, and excused himself by remarking that he had a very bad memory for faces. At dinner he affected to be smart, he inquired in a certain superior way about the affairs of the little town, and wondered, jestingly, whether Bertha was not thinking of marrying again. Agatha also took part in this bantering, although, at the same time, she occasionally glanced reprovingly at her husband, who was trying to give the conversation a frivolous turn.

Bertha felt ill at ease. Later on she gathered from some words of Agatha's husband that they were expecting another addition to their family. Usually Bertha felt sympathy for women in such circumstances, but in this case the news created an almost unpleasant impression upon her. Moreover there was not a trace of love to be discerned in the tone of the husband's voice when he referred to it, but rather a kind of foolish pride on the score of an accomplished duty. He spoke of the matter as though it was a special act of kindness on his part that, in spite of the fact that he was a busy man, and Agatha was no longer beautiful, he condescended to spend his time at home. Bertha had an impression that she was being mixed up in some sordid affair which did not concern her in the least. She was glad when, as soon as he had finished his dinner, the husband went off — it was his custom, "his only vice," as he said with a smile, to play billiards at the restaurant for an hour after dinner.

Bertha and Agatha were left together.

"Yes," said Agatha, "I've got that to look forward to again."

Thereupon she began, in a cold, businesslike way, to talk about her previous confinements, with a candour and lack of modesty which seemed all the more remarkable because they had become such strangers. While Agatha was continuing the relation of her experiences, however, the thought suddenly passed through Bertha's mind that it must be glorious to have a child by a husband whom one loved.

She ceased to pay attention to her cousin's unpleasant talk; and her thoughts were only occupied by the infinite yearning for motherhood which had often come over her when she was quite a young girl, and she called to mind an occasion when that yearning had been more keen than it had ever been, either before or after. This had happened one evening when Emil Lindbach had accompanied her home from the conservatoire, her hand clasped in his. She still remembered how her head had begun to swim, and that at one moment she had understood what the phrase meant which she had sometimes read in novels: "He could have done with her just as he liked."

Then she noticed that it had grown quite silent in the room, and that Agatha was leaning back in the corner of the sofa, apparently asleep. It was three by the clock. How tiresome it was that Frau Rupius had not yet arrived! Bertha went to the window and looked out into the street. Then she turned towards Agatha, who had again opened her eyes. Bertha quickly tried to begin a fresh conversation, and told her about the new costume which she had ordered in the forenoon, but Agatha was too sleepy even to answer. Bertha had no wish to put her cousin out, and took her departure. She decided to wait for Frau Rupius in the street. Agatha seemed very pleased when Bertha got ready to go. She became more cordial than she had been at any time during her cousin's visit, and said at the door, as if struck by some brilliant idea:

"How the time does pass! I do hope you'll come and see us again soon."

Bertha, as she stood before the door of the house, realized that she was waiting for Frau Rupius in vain. There was no doubt that it had been the latter's intention from the beginning to spend the afternoon without her. Of course, it did not necessarily follow that there was anything wicked in it; as a matter of fact there was nothing wicked in it, but it hurt Bertha to think that Anna had so little trust in her.

She walked along with no fixed purpose. She had still more than three hours to while away before she was to be at the station. At first, she took a walk in the inner town, which she had passed through in the morning. It was really a pleasant thing to wander about unobserved like this, as a stranger in the crowd. It was long since she had experienced that pleasure. Some of the men who passed her glanced at her with interest, and more than one, indeed, stopped to gaze after her. She regretted that she was dressed to so little advantage, and rejoiced at the prospect of obtaining soon the beautiful costume she had ordered from the Viennese dressmaker. She would have liked to find some one following her.

Suddenly the thought passed through her mind: would Emil Lindbach recognize her if she were to meet him? What a question! Such things never happened, of course. No, she was quite sure that she could wander about Vienna the whole day long without ever meeting him. How long was it since she had seen him? Seven — eight years…. Yes, the last time she had met him was two years before her marriage. She had been with her parents one warm summer evening in the Schweitzerhaus on the Prater; he had gone by with a friend and had stopped a few minutes at their table. Ah, and now she remembered also that amongst the company at their table there had been the young doctor who was courting her. She had forgotten what Emil had said on that occasion, but she remembered that he had held his hat in his hand during the whole time he was standing before her, which had afforded her inexpressible delight. Would he do the same now, she thought to herself, if she were to meet him?

Where was he living now, she wondered. In the old days he had a room on the Weiden, near St. Paul's Church…. Yes, he had pointed out the window as they passed one day, and had ventured, as they did so, to make a certain remark — she had forgotten the exact words, but there was no doubt that they had been to the effect that he and she ought to be in that room together. She had rebuked him very severely for saying such a thing; she had even gone the length of telling him that if that was the sort of girl he thought she was, all was over between them. And, in fact, he had never spoken another word on the subject.

Would she recognize the window again? Would she find it? It was all the same to her, of course, whether she went for a walk in this direction or that. She hurried towards the Weiden as though she had suddenly found an object for her walk. She was amazed at the complete change which had come over the neighbourhood. When she looked down from the Elizabeth Bridge she saw walls that rose from the bed of the Wien, half finished tracks, little trucks moving to and fro, and busy workmen. Soon she reached St. Paul's Church by the same road as she had so often followed in the old days. But then she came to a standstill; she was absolutely at a loss to remember where Emil had lived — whether she had to turn to the right or to the left. It was strange how completely it had escaped her memory. She walked slowly back as far as the Conservatoire, then she stood still. Above her were the windows from which she had so often gazed upon the dome of St. Charles' Church, and longingly awaited the end of the lesson so that she might meet Emil. How great had been her love for him, indeed; and how strange it was that it should have died so completely!

And now, when she had returned to these scenes, she was a widow, had been so for years, and had a child at home who was growing up. If she had died, Emil would never have heard of it, or perhaps not until years afterwards. Her eyes fell on a large placard fixed on the entrance, gates of the Conservatoire. It was an announcement of the concert at which he was going to play, and there was his name appearing among a number of other great ones, many of which she had long since admired with gentle awe.

"BRAHMS VIOLIN CONCERTO — EMIL LINDBACH, VIOLINIST TO THE COURT OF BAVARIA."

"Violinist to the Court of Bavaria!" — she had never heard anything about that before.

Gazing up at his name, which stood out in glittering letters, it seemed to her as though the next moment Emil himself might come out through the gate, his violin case in his hand, a cigarette between his lips. Of a sudden it all seemed so near, and nearer still when all at once from the windows above came floating down the long-drawn notes of a violin, just as she had so often heard in the old days.

She thought she would like to come to Vienna for that concert — yes, even if she should be obliged to spend the night at an hotel! And she would take a seat right in front and see him quite close at hand. She wondered whether he, in his turn, would see her, and, if so, whether he would recognize her. She remained

standing before the yellow placard, wholly absorbed in thought, until she felt that some young people coming out of the Conservatoire were staring at her and then she realized that she had been smiling to herself the whole time, as if lost in a pleasant dream.

She proceeded to walk on. The district around the town-park had also changed, and, when she sought the places where she and Emil had often been for walks together, she found that they had quite' disappeared. Trees had been felled, boardings barred the way, the ground had been dug up, and in vain she tried to find the seat where she and Emil had exchanged words of love, the tone of which she remembered so well without being able to recall the actual phrases.

Presently she reached the trim well-kept part of the park, which was full of people. But she had a sensation that many were looking at her, and that some ladies were laughing at her. And once more she felt that she was looking very countrified. She was vexed at being embarrassed, and thought of the time when, as a pretty young girl, she had walked, proud and unconcerned, along these very avenues. It seemed to her that she had fallen off so much since then, and become so pitiable. Her idea of sitting in the front row of the concert hall appeared presumptuous, almost unfeasible. It seemed also highly improbable now that Emil Lindbach would recognize her; indeed, it struck her as almost impossible that he should remember her existence. What a number of experiences he must have had! How many women and girls might well have loved him — and in a manner quite different from her own!

And whilst she continued her way, walking, now along the less frequented avenues and at length out of the park upon the Ringstrasse again, she drew a mental picture of the beloved of her youth figuring in all manner of adventures, in which confused recollections of events depicted in the novels she had read and indistinctly formed ideas of his professional tours were strangely intermingled. She imagined him in Venice with a Russian princess in a gondola; then in her mind's eye she saw him at the court of the King of Bavaria, where duchesses listened to his playing, and fell in love with him; then in the boudoir of an opera singer; then at a fancy-dress ball in Spain, with crowds of alluring masqueraders about him. The further he seemed to soar away, unapproachable and enviable, the more miserable she felt herself to be, and all at once it seemed utterly inconceivable that she had so lightly surrendered her own hopes of an artistic career and given up her lover, in order to lead a sunless existence, and to be lost in the crowd. A shudder seemed to seize her as she recalled that she was nothing but the widow of an insignificant man, that she lived in a provincial town, that she earned her living by means of music lessons, and that she saw old age slowly approaching. Never had there fallen upon her way so much as a single ray of the brilliance which shone upon the road his footsteps would tread so long as he lived. And again the same shudder ran through her at the thought that she had always been content with her lot, and that, without hope and indeed, without yearning, she had passed her whole existence in a gloom, which, at that moment, seemed inexplicable.

She reached the Aspernbrueke without in the least giving heed to where her footsteps were taking her. She wished to cross the street at this point, but had to wait while a great number of carriages drove by. Most of them were occupied by gentlemen, many of whom carried field-glasses. She knew that they were returning from the races at the Prater.

There came an elegant equipage in which were seated a young man and a girl, the latter dressed in a white spring costume. Immediately behind was a carriage containing two strikingly dressed ladies. Bertha gazed long after them, and noticed that one of the ladies turned round, and that the object of her attention was the carriage which followed immediately behind, and in which sat a young and very handsome man in a long grey overcoat. Bertha was conscious of something very painful — uneasiness and annoyance at one and the same time. She would have liked to be the lady whom the young man followed; she would have liked to be

beautiful, young, independent, and, Heaven knows, she would have liked to be any woman who could do as she wanted, and could turn round after men who pleased her.

And at that moment she realized, quite distinctly, that Frau Rupius was now in the company of somebody whom she loved. Indeed why shouldn't she? Of course, so long as she stayed in Vienna, she was free and mistress of her own time — besides, she was a very pretty woman, and was wearing a fragrant violet costume. On her lips there hovered a smile such as only comes to those who are happy — and Frau Rupius was unhappy at home. All at once, Bertha had a vision of Herr Rupius sitting in his room, looking at the engravings. But on that day, surely, he was not doing so; no, he was trembling for his wife, consumed with an immense fear that some one yonder in the great city would take her away from him, that she would never return, and that he would be left all alone with his sorrow. And Bertha suddenly felt a thrill of compassion for him, such as she had never experienced before. Indeed, she would have liked to be with him, to comfort and to reassure him.

She felt a touch on her arm. She started and looked up. A young man was standing beside her and gazing at her with an impudent leer. She stared at him, full in the face, still quite absentmindedly; then he said with a laugh:

"Well?"

She was frightened, and almost ran across the street, quickly passing in front of a carriage. She was ashamed of her previous desire to be the lady in the carriage she had seen coming from the Prater. It seemed as though the man's insolence had been her punishment. No, no, she was a respectable woman; in the depth of her soul she had an aversion to everything that savoured of the insolent…. No, she could no longer stay in Vienna, where women were exposed to such things! A longing for the peace of her home came over her, and she rejoiced in the prospect of meeting her little boy again, as in something extraordinarily beautiful.

What time was it, though? Heavens, a quarter of seven! She would have to take a carriage; there was no question about that now, indeed! Frau Rupius had, of course, paid for the carriage in the morning, and so the one which she was now going to take would only cost her half, so to speak. She took her seat in an open cab, leaned back in the corner, in almost the same aristocratic manner as that of the lady she had seen in the white frock. People gazed after her. She knew that she was now looking young and pretty. Moreover, she was feeling quite safe, nothing could happen to her. She took an indescribable pleasure in the swift motion of the cab with its rubber-tyred wheels. She thought how splendid it would be if on the occasion of her next visit she were to drive through the town, wearing her new costume and the small straw hat which made her look so young.

She was glad that Frau Rupius was standing in the entrance to the station and saw her arrive. But she betrayed no sign of pride, and acted as though it was quite the usual thing for her to drive up to the station in a cab.

"We have still ten minutes to spare," said Frau Rupius. "Are you very angry with me for having kept you waiting? Just fancy, my brother was giving a grand children's party to-day, and the little ones simply wouldn't let me go. It occurred to me too late that I might really have called for you; the children would have amused you so much. I have told my brother that, next time, I will bring you and your boy with me."

Bertha felt heartily ashamed of herself. How she had wronged this woman again! She could only press her hand and say:

"Thank you, you are very kind!"

They went on to the platform and entered an empty compartment. Frau Rupius had a small bag of cherries in her hand, and she ate them slowly, one after another, throwing the stones out of the window. When the

train began to move out of the station she leaned back and closed her eyes. Bertha looked out of the window; she felt very tired after so much walking, and a slight uneasiness arose within her; she might have spent the day differently, more quietly and enjoyably. Her chilly reception and the tedious dinner at her cousin's came to her mind. After all, it was a great pity that she no longer had any acquaintances in Vienna. She had wandered like a stranger about the town in which she had lived twenty-six years. Why? And why had she not made the carriage pull up in the morning, when she saw the figure that seemed to have a resemblance to Emil Lindbach? True, she would not have been able to run or call after him — but if it had been really he, if he had recognized her and been pleased to see her again? They might have walked about together, might have told each other all that had happened during the long time that had passed since they had last known anything about one another; they might have gone to a fashionable restaurant and had dinner; some would naturally have recognized him, and she would have heard quite distinctly people discussing the question as to who "she" might really be. She was looking beautiful, too; the new costume was already finished; and the waiters served her with great politeness, especially a small youth who brought the wine — but he was really her nephew, who had, of course, become a waiter in that restaurant instead of a student. Suddenly Herr and Frau Martin entered the dining-hall; they were holding one another in such a tender embrace as if they were the only people there. Then Emil rose to his feet, took up the violin bow which was lying beside him, and raised it with a commanding gesture, whereupon the waiter turned Herr and Frau Martin out of the room. Bertha could not help laughing at the incident, laughing much too loudly indeed, for by this time she had quite forgotten how to behave in a fashionable restaurant. But then it was not a fashionable restaurant at all; it was only the coffee room at the "Red Apple," and the military band was playing somewhere out of sight. That, be it known, was a clever invention on the part of Herr Rupius, that military bands could play without being seen. Now, however, it was her turn that was immediately to follow. Yonder was the piano — but, of course, she had long since completely forgotten how to play; she would run away rather than be forced to play. And all at once she was at the railway station, where Frau Rupius was already waiting for her. "It is high time you came," she said. She placed in Bertha's hand a large book, which, by the way, was her ticket. Frau Rupius, however, was not going to take the train; she sat down, ate cherries and spat out the stones at the stationmaster, who took a huge delight in the proceedings. Bertha entered the compartment. Thank God, Herr Klingemann was already there! He made a sign to her with his screwed-up eyes, and asked her if she knew whose funeral it was. She saw that a hearse was standing on the other line. Then she remembered that the captain with whom the tobacconist's wife had deceived Herr Klingemann was dead — of course, it was the day of the concert at the "Red Apple." Suddenly Herr Klingemann blew on her eyes, and laughed in a rumbling way.

Bertha opened her eyes — at that moment a train was rushing past the window. She shook herself. What a confused dream! And hadn't it begun quite nicely? She tried to remember. Yes, Emil played a part in it … but she could not recollect what part.

The dusk of evening slowly fell. The train sped on its way along by the Danube. Frau Rupius slept and smiled. Perhaps she was only pretending to be asleep. Bertha was again seized with a slight suspicion, and she felt rising within her a sensation of envy at the unknown and mysterious experiences which Frau Rupius had had. She, too, would gladly have experienced something. She wished that someone was sitting beside her now, his arm pressed against hers — she would fain have felt once more that sensation that had thrilled her on that occasion when she had stood with Emil on the bank of the Wien, and when she had almost been on the point of losing her senses and had yearned for a child…. Ah, why was she so poor, so lonely, so much in obscurity? Gladly would she have implored the lover of her youth:

“Kiss me but once again just as you used to do, I want to be happy!”

It was dark; Bertha looked out into the night.

She determined that very night before she went to bed to fetch from the attic the little case in which she kept the letters of her parents and of Emil. She longed to be home again. She felt as though a question had been wakened within her soul, and that the answer awaited her at home.

IV

WHEN, LATE IN the evening, Bertha entered her room, the idea which she had taken into her head of going up to the attic at once and fetching down the case with the letters seemed to her to be almost venturesome. She was afraid that some one in the house might observe her on her nocturnal pilgrimage, and might take her for mad. She could, of course, go up the next morning quite conveniently and without causing any stir; and so she fell asleep, feeling like a child who has been promised an outing into the country on the following day.

She had much to do the next forenoon; her domestic duties and piano lessons occupied the whole of the time. She had to give her sister-in-law an account of her visit to Vienna. Her story was that in the afternoon she had gone for a walk with her cousin, and the impression was conveyed that she had made an excuse to Frau Rupius at the request of Agatha.

It was not until the afternoon that she went up to the attic and brought down the dusty travelling-case, which was lying beside a trunk and a couple of boxes — the whole collection covered with an old and torn piece of red-flowered coffee-cloth. She remembered that her object on the last occasion on which she had opened the case had been to put away the papers which her parents had left behind. On her return to her room she opened the case and perceived lying on top of the other contents a number of letters from her brothers and other letters, with the handwriting of which she was not familiar; then she found a neat little bundle containing the few letters which her parents had addressed to her: these were followed by two books of her mother's household accounts, a little copybook dating back to her own schooldays and containing entries of timetables and exercises, a few programmes of the dances which she had attended when a young girl, and, finally, Emil Lindbach's letters, which were wrapped up in blue tissue paper, torn here and there. And now she was able to fix the very day on which she had last held those letters in her hand, although she had not read them on that occasion. It was when her father had been lying ill for some time and, for whole days, she had not once gone outside the door.

She laid the bundle aside. She wanted, first of all, to see all the other things which had been stored in the case, and concerning which she was consumed with curiosity. A number of letters lay in a loose heap at the bottom of the case, some with their envelopes and others without. She cast her eye over them at random. There were letters from old friends, a few from her cousin, and here was one from the doctor who had courted her in the old days. In it he asked her to reserve for him the first waltz at the medical students' dance. Here — what was it? Why, it was that anonymous letter which some one had addressed to her at the Conservatoire. She picked it up and read:

"My Dear Fraulein,

"Yesterday I again had the good fortune to have an opportunity of admiring you on your daily walk; I do not know whether I had also the good fortune to be observed by you."

No, he had not had that good fortune. Then followed three pages of enthusiastic admiration, and not a single wish, not a single bold word. She had, moreover, never heard anything more of the writer.

Here was a letter signed by two initials, "M.G." That was the impudent fellow who had once spoken to her in the street, and who in this letter made proposals — wait a minute, what were they? Ah, here was the passage which had sent the hot blood mounting to her brow when she had first read it:

"Since I have seen you, and since you have looked on me with a glance so stern and yet seemingly so full of promise, I have had but one dream, but one yearning — that I might kiss those eyes!"

Of course, she had not answered the letter; she was in love with Emil at the time. Indeed, she had even thought of showing him the letter, but was restrained by the fear of rousing his jealousy. Emil had never learned anything of "M. G."

And that piece of soft ribbon that now fell into her hands?… A cravat … but she had quite forgotten whose it was, and why she had kept it.

Here again was a little dance album in which she had written the names of her partners. She tried to call the young men to mind, but in vain. Though, by the way, it was at that very dance that she had met that man who had said such passionate words to her as she had never heard from any other. It seemed as though he suddenly emerged a victor from among the many shadows that hovered around her. It must have happened during the time when she and Emil had been meeting each other less frequently. How strange it was … or had it only been a dream? This passionate admirer had clasped her closely in his arms during the dance — and she had not offered the slightest resistance. She had felt his lips in her hair, and it had been incredibly pleasant … Well, and then? — she had never seen him again.

It suddenly seemed to her that, after all, in those days she had had many and strange experiences, and she was lost in amazement at the way in which all these memories had slumbered so long in the travelling case and in her soul…. But no, they had not slumbered; she had thought of all these things many a time: of the men who had courted her, of the anonymous letter, of her passionate partner at the dance, of the walks with Emil — but only as if they had been merely such things as go to constitute the past, the youth which is allotted to every young girl, and from which she emerges to lead the placid life of a woman. On the present occasion, however, it seemed to Bertha as if these recollections were, so to speak, unredeemed promises, as if in those experiences of distant days there lay destinies which had not been fulfilled; nay, more, as if a kind of deception had long been practised upon her, from the very day on which she had been married until the present moment; as if she had discovered it all too late; and here she was, unable to lift a finger to alter her destiny.

Yet why should it seem so?… She thought of all these futile things, and there beside her, wrapped up in tissue paper, still lay the treasure, for the sake of which alone she had rummaged in the case — the letters of the only man she had loved, the letters written in the days when she had been happy. How many women might there be now who envied her because that very man had once loved her — loved her with a different, better, chaster love than that which he had given any of the women who had followed her in his affections. She felt herself most bitterly deceived that she, who could have been his wife if … if … her thoughts broke off.

Hurriedly, as though seeking to rid her mind of doubt, or rather, indeed, of fear, she tore off the tissue paper and seized the letters. And she read — read them one after another. Long letters, short letters; brief, hasty notes, like: "To-morrow evening, darling, at seven o'clock!" or "Dearest, just one kiss ere I go to sleep!" letters that covered many pages, written during the walking tours which he and his fellow students had taken in the summer; letters written in the evening, in which he had felt constrained to impart to her his impressions of a concert immediately on returning home; endless pages in which he unfolded his plans for the future; how they would travel together through Spain and America, famous and happy … she read them all, one after another, as though tortured by a quenchless thirst. She read from the very first, which had accompanied a few pieces of music, to the last, which was dated two and a half years later, and contained nothing more than a greeting from Salzburg.

When she came to an end she let her hands fall into her lap and gazed fixedly at the sheets lying about. Why had that been the last letter? How had their friendship come to an end? How could it have come to an

end? How had it been possible that that great love had died away? There had never been any actual rupture between Emil and herself; they had never come to any definite understanding that all was over between them, and yet their acquaintanceship had ended at some time or other — when?… She could not tell, because at the time when he had written that card to her from Salzburg she had still been in love with him. She had, as a matter of fact, met him in the autumn — indeed, during the winter of the same year everything had seemed once more to blossom forth. She remembered certain walks they had taken over the crunching snow, arm in arm, beside St. Charles' Church — but when was it that they had taken the last of these walks? They had, to be sure, never taken farewell of each other…. She could not understand it.

How was it that she had been able so easily to renounce a happiness which it might yet have been within her power to retain? How had it come about that she had ceased to love him? Had the dullness of the daily routine of her home life, which weighed so heavily upon her spirits ever since she had left the Conservatoire, lulled her feelings to sleep just as it had blunted the edge of her ambitions? Had the querulous remarks of her parents on the subject of her friendship with the youthful violinist — which had seemed likely to lead to nothing — acted on her with such sobering effect?

Then she recalled to mind that even at a later date, when some months had elapsed since she had last seen him, he had called at her parents' house, and had kissed her in the back room. Yes, that had been the last time of all. And then she remembered further that on that occasion she had noticed that his relation towards women had changed; that he must have had experiences of which she could know nothing — but the discovery had not caused her any pain.

She asked herself how it all would have turned out if in those days she had not been so virtuous, if she had taken life as easily as some of the other girls? She called to mind a girl at the Conservatoire with whom she had ceased to associate on finding that her friend had an intrigue with a dramatic student. She remembered again the suggestive words which Emil had spoken as they were walking together past his window, and the yearning that had come over her as they stood by the bank of the Wien. It seemed inconceivable that those words had not affected her more keenly at the moment, that that yearning had been awakened within her only once, and then only for so short a time. With a kind of perplexed amazement she thought of that period of placid purity and then, with a sudden agonized feeling of shame which drove the blood to her temples, of the cold readiness with which she had given herself afterwards to a man whom she had never loved. The consciousness that whatever happiness she had tasted in the course of her married life had been gained in the arms of the husband she had not loved made her shudder with horror, for the first time, in its utter wretchedness. Had that, then, been life such as her thoughts had depicted to her, had that been the mystic happiness such as she had yearned for?… And a dull feeling of resentment against everything and everybody, against the living and the dead, began to smoulder within her bosom. She was angry with her dead husband and with her dead father and mother; she was indignant with the people amongst whom she was now living, whose eyes were always upon her so that she dared not allow herself any freedom; she was hurt with Frau Rupius, who had not turned out to be such a friend that Bertha could rely on her for support; she hated Klingemann because, ugly and repulsive as he was, he desired to make her his wife; and finally she was violently enraged with the man she had loved in the days of her girlhood, because he had not been bolder, because he had withheld from her the ultimate happiness, and because he had bequeathed her nothing but memories full of fragrance, yet full of torment. And there she was, sitting in her lonely room amongst the faded mementoes of a youth that had passed unprofitably and friendlessly; there she was, on the verge of the time when there would be no more hopes and no more desires — life had slipped through her fingers, and she was thirty and poor.

She wrapped up the letters and the other things, and threw them, all crumpled as they were, into the case. Then she closed it and went over to the window.

Evening was at hand. A gentle breeze was blowing over from the direction of the vine-trellises. Her eyes swam with unwept tears, not of grief, but of exasperation. What was she to do? She, who had, without fear and without hope, seen the days, nights, months, years extending into the future, shuddered at the prospect of the emptiness of the evening which lay before her.

It was the hour at which she usually returned home from her walk. On that day she had sent the nursemaid out with Fritz — not so much as once did she yearn for her boy. Indeed, for one moment there even fell on her child a ray of the anger which she felt against all mankind and against her fate. And, in her vast discontent, she was seized with a feeling of envy against many people who, at ordinary times, seemed to her anything but enviable. She envied Frau Martin because of the tender affection of her husband; the tobacconist's wife because she was loved by Herr Klingemann and the captain; her sister-in-law, because she was already old; Elly, because she was still young; she envied the servant, who was sitting on a plank over there with a soldier, and whom she heard laughing. She could not endure being at home any longer; She took up her straw hat and sunshade and hurried into the street. There she felt somewhat better. In her room she had been unhappy; in the street she was no more than out of humour.

In the main thoroughfare she met Herr and Frau Mahlmann, to whose children she gave music lessons. Frau Mahlmann was already aware that Bertha had ordered a costume from a dressmaker in Vienna on the previous day, and she began to discuss the matter with great weightiness. Later on, Bertha met her brother-in-law, who came towards her from the chestnut avenue.

"Well," he said, "so you were in Vienna yesterday! Tell me, what did you do with yourself there? Did you have any adventures?"

"What do you mean?" asked Bertha, looking at him in great alarm, as though she had done something she ought not, and had been found out.

"What? You had no adventures? But you were with Frau Rupius; all the men must surely have run after you?"

"What on earth has come into your head? Frau Rupius' conduct is irreproachable! She is one of the most well-bred ladies I know."

"Quite so, quite so! I am not saying a word against Frau Rupius or you."

She looked him in the face. His eyes were gleaming, as they often did when he had had a little too much to drink. She could not help recalling that somebody had once foretold that Herr Garlan would die of an apoplectic stroke.

"I must pay another visit to Vienna myself one of these days," he said. "Why, I haven't been there since Ash Wednesday. I should like to see some of my acquaintances once again. The next time you and Frau Rupius go, you might just take me with you."

"With pleasure," answered Bertha. "I shall have to go again, of course, before long, to have my costume tried on."

Garlan laughed.

"Yes, and you can take me with you, too, when you try it on."

He sidled up closer to her than was necessary. It was a way he had always to squeeze up against her, and, moreover, she was accustomed to his jokes, but on the present occasion she thought him particularly objectionable. She was very much annoyed that he, of all men, always spoke of Frau Rupius in such a suspicious way.

“Let us sit down,” said Herr Garlan; “if you don’t mind.”

They both sat down on a seat. Garlan took the newspaper from his pocket.

“Ah!” said Bertha involuntarily.

“Will you have it?” asked Garlan.

“Has your wife read it yet?”

“Tut, tut!” said Garlan disdainfully. “Will you have it?”

“If you can spare it.”

“For you — with pleasure. But we might just as well read it together.”

He edged closer to Bertha and opened the paper.

Herr and Frau Martin came along, arm in arm, and stopped before them.

“Well, so you are back again from the momentous journey,” said
Herr Martin.

“Ah, yes, you were in Vienna,” said Frau Martin, nestling against her husband. “And with Frau Rupius, too,” she added, as though that implied an aggravation of the offence.

Once more Bertha had to give an account of her new costume. She told them all about it in a somewhat mechanical manner, indeed; but she felt, none the less, that it was long since she had been such an interesting personage as she was now.

Klingemann went by, bowed with ironical politeness, and turned round to Bertha with a look which seemed to express his sympathy for her in having to be friendly with such people.

It seemed to Bertha as though she were gifted that day with the ability to read men’s glances.

It began to grow dark. They set off together towards the town. Bertha suddenly grew uneasy at not having met her boy. She walked on in front with Frau Martin, who turned the conversation on to the subject of Frau Rupius. She badly wanted to find out whether Bertha had observed anything.

“But what do you mean, Frau Martin? I accompanied Frau Rupius to her brother’s house, and called for her there on my way back.”

“And are you convinced that she was with her brother the whole time?”

“I really don’t know what you expect Frau Rupius to do! Where would she have been then?”

“Well,” said Frau Martin; “really, you are an artless creature. I must say — or are you only putting on? Do you quite forget then …”

Then she whispered something into Bertha’s ear, at which the latter grew very red. She had never heard such an expression from a woman. She was indignant.

“Frau Martin,” she said, “I am not so old myself either and, as you see, it is quite possible to live a decent life in such circumstances.”

Frau Martin was a little taken aback.

“Yes, of course!” she said. “Yes, of course! You must, I dare say, think that I am a little over-nice in such matters.”

Bertha was afraid that Frau Martin might be about to give her some further and more intimate disclosures, and she was very glad to find that, at that moment, they had reached the street corner where she could say good-bye.

“Bertha, here’s your paper!” her brother-in-law called after her.

She turned round quickly and took the paper. Then she hastened home. Fritz had returned and was waiting

for her at the window. She hurried up to him. She embraced and kissed him as though she had not seen him for weeks. She felt that she was completely engrossed with love for her boy, a fact which, at the time, filled her with pride. She listened to his account of how he had spent the afternoon, where he had been, and with whom he had played. She cut up his supper for him, undressed him, put him to bed, and was satisfied with herself. Her state of mind of the afternoon, when she had rummaged among the old letters, had cursed her fate and had even envied the tobacconist's wife, seemed to her, at the thought of it, as an attack of fever. She ate a hearty supper and went to bed early. Before falling to sleep, however, it occurred to her that she would like to read the paper. She stretched her limbs, shook up the soft bolster so that her head should be higher, and held the paper as near the candle as possible.

As her custom was, she first of all skimmed through the theatrical and art news. Even the short announcements, as well as the local reports, had acquired a new interest for her, since her trip to Vienna. Her eyelids were beginning to grow heavy when all at once she observed the name of Emil Lindbach amongst the personal news. She opened her eyes wide, sat up in bed and read the paragraph.

"Emil Lindbach, violinist to the Court of Bavaria, whose great success at the Spanish Court we were recently in a position to announce, has been honoured by the Queen of Spain, who has invested him with the Order of the Redeemer."

A smile flitted across her lips. She was glad, Emil Lindbach had obtained the Order of the Redeemer…. Yes … the man whose letters she had been reading that very day … the man who had kissed her — the man who had once written to her that he would never adore any other woman…. Yes, Emil — the only man in all the world in whom she really had still any interest — except her boy, of course. She felt as though this notice in the paper was intended only for her, as though, indeed, Emil himself had selected that expedient, so as to establish some means of communication with her. Had it not been he, after all, whose back she had seen in the distance on the previous day? All at once she seemed to be quite near to him; still smiling, she whispered to herself: "Herr Emil Lindbach, violinist to the Court of Bavaria, … I congratulate you…."

Her lips remained half open. An idea had suddenly come to her. She got up quickly, donned her dressing-gown, took up the light and went into the adjoining room. She sat down at the table and wrote the following letter as fluently as though some one were standing beside her and dictating it, word for word:

"DEAR EMIL,

"I have just read in the newspaper that the Queen of Spain has honoured you by investing you with the Order of the Redeemer. I do not know whether you still remember me" — she smiled as she wrote these words— "but, all the same, I will not let this opportunity slip without congratulating you upon your many successes, of which I so often have the pleasure of reading. I am living most contentedly in the little town where fate has cast me; I am getting on very well!

"A few lines in reply would make me very happy.

"Your old friend,

"BERTHA.

"P.S. — Kind regards also from my little Fritz (five years old)."

She had finished the letter. For a moment she asked herself whether she should mention that she was a widow; but even if he had not known it before, it was quite obvious from her letter. She read it over and nodded contentedly. She wrote the address.

“Herr Emil Lindbach, violinist to the Court of Bavaria, Holder of the Order of the Redeemer …” Should she write all that? He was certain to have many other Orders also … “Vienna …”

But where was he living at present? That, however, was of no consequence with such a celebrated name. Moreover the inaccuracy in the address would also show that she did not attach so very much importance to it all; if the letter reached him — well, so much the better. It was also a way of putting fate to the test…. Ah, but how was she to know for a certainty that the letter had arrived or not? The answer might, of course, quite easily fail to reach her if…. No, no, certainly not! He would be sure to thank her. And so, to bed.

She held the letter in her hand. No, she could not go to bed now, she was wide awake again. And, moreover, if she did not post the letter until next morning it would not go before the midday train, and would not reach Emil before the day after. That was an interminably long time. She had just spoken to him, and were thirty-six hours to be allowed to elapse before her words reached his ears?… Supposing she did not wait, but went to the post now?… no, to the station? Then he would have the letter at ten o’clock the next morning. He was certain to be late in rising — the letter would be brought into his room with his breakfast…. Yes, she must post the letter at once!

Quickly she dressed again. She hurried down the stairs — it was not yet late — she hastened along the main street to the station, put the letter in the yellow box, and was home again.

As she stood in her room, beside the tumbled bed, and she saw the paper lying on the floor and the candle flickering, it seemed as though she had returned from a strange adventure. For a long time she remained sitting on the edge of the bed, gazing through the window into the bright, starlit night, and her soul was filled with vague and pleasurable expectations.

V



"My Dear Bertha!

"I am wholly unable to tell you how glad I was to receive your letter. Do you really still think of me, then? How curious it is that it should have been an Order, of all things, that was the cause of my hearing from you again! Well, at all events, an Order has at least had some significance for once in a way! Therefore, I heartily thank you for your congratulations. But, apart from all that, don't you come to Vienna sometimes? It is not so very far, after all. I should be immensely pleased to see you again. So come soon!

"With all my heart,

"Your old

"Emil."

Bertha was sitting at breakfast, Fritz beside her. He was chatting, but she was not listening to him. The letter lay before her on the table.

It seemed miraculous. Two nights and a day ago she had posted her letter, and here was his reply already. Emil had not allowed a day to pass, not even an hour! He had written to her as cordially as if they had only parted the previous day.

She looked out of the window. What a splendid morning it was! Outside the birds were singing, and from the hills came floating down the fragrance of the early summer-tide.

Bertha read the letter again and again. Then she took Fritz, lifted him up and kissed him to her heart's content. It was long since she had been so happy.

While she was dressing she turned things over in her mind. It was Thursday; on Monday she had to go to Vienna again to try on the costume. That was four long days, just the same space of time as had elapsed since she had dined at her brother-in-law's — what a long time it seemed to have to wait. No, she must see Emil sooner than that. She could, of course, go the very next morning and remain in Vienna a few days. But what excuse could she make to the people at home?… Oh, she would be sure to find some pretext. It was more important to decide in what way she should answer his letter and tell him where she would meet him…. She could not write and say: "I am coming, please let me know where I can see you…." Perhaps he would answer: "Come to my rooms…." No, no, no! It would be best to let him have a definite statement of fact. She would write to the effect that she was going to Vienna on such and such a day and was to be found at such and such a place….

Oh, if she only had someone with whom she could talk the whole thing over!… She thought of Frau Rupius — she had a genuine yearning to tell her everything. At the same time she had an idea that, by so doing, she might become more intimate with her and might win her esteem. She felt that she had become much more important since the receipt of Emil's letter. Now she remarked, too, that she had been very much afraid that Emil might quite possibly have changed and become conceited, affected and spoiled — just as was the case with so many celebrated men. But there was not the slightest trace of such things in the letter; there was the same quick, heavy writing, the same warmth of tone, as in those earlier letters. What a number of experiences he might well have had since she had last seen him — well, had not she also had many experiences, and were they not all seemingly obliterated?

Before going out she read Emil's letter again. It grew more like a living voice; she heard the cadence of the words, and that final "Come soon" seemed to call her with tender yearning. She stuck the letter into her

bodice and remembered how, as a girl, she had often done the same with his notes, and how the gentle touch had sent a pleasant thrill coursing through her.

First of all, she went to the Mahlmanns', where she gave the twins their music lesson. Very often the finger exercises, to which she had to listen there, were positively painful to her, and she would rap the children on the knuckles when they struck a false note. On the present occasion, however, she was not in the least strict. When Frau Mahlmann, fat and friendly as ever, came into the room and inquired whether Bertha was satisfied, the latter praised the children and added, as though suddenly inspired:

"Now, I shall be able to give them a few days' holiday."

"Holiday! How will that be, then, dear Frau Garlan?"

"You see, Frau Mahlmann, I have no choice in the matter. What do you think, when I was in Vienna lately my cousin begged me so pressingly to be sure to come and spend a few days with her—"

"Quite so, quite so," said Frau Mahlmann.

Bertha's courage kept rising, and she continued to add falsehood to falsehood, taking a kind of pleasure in her own boldness:

"I really wanted to put it off till June. But this very morning I had a letter from her, saying that her husband is going away for a time, and she is so lonely, and just now" — she felt the letter crackle, and had an indescribable desire to take it out; but yet restrained herself— "and I, think I shall perhaps take advantage of the opportunity…."

"Well, to tell the truth," said Frau Mahlmann, taking Bertha by both hands, "if I had a cousin in Vienna, I would like to stay with her a week every fortnight!"

Bertha beamed. She felt as though an invisible hand was clearing away the obstacles which lay in her path; everything was going so well. And, indeed, to whom, after all, was she accountable for her actions? Suddenly, however, the fear flashed through her mind that her brother-in-law really intended to go with her to Vienna. Everything became entangled again; dangers cropped up and suspicion lurked even under the good-natured smile of Frau Mahlmann….

Ah, she must on no account fail to take Frau Rupius into her confidence.
Directly the lesson was over she went to call upon her.

It was not until she had found Frau Rupius in a white morning gown, sitting on the sofa, and had observed the surprised glance with which the latter received her, that it struck Bertha that there was anything strange in her early visit, and she said with affected cheerfulness:

"Good morning! I'm early to-day, am I not?"

Frau Rupius remained serious. She had not the usual smile on her lips.

"I am very glad to see you. The hour makes no difference to me."

Then she threw her a questioning glance, and Bertha did not know what to say. She was annoyed, too, at the childish embarrassment, of which she could not rid herself in the presence of Frau Rupius.

"I wanted," she said, at length, "to ask you how you felt after our trip."

"Quite well," answered Frau Rupius, rather stiffly. But all at once her features changed, and she added with excessive friendliness: "Really, it was my place to have asked you. I am accustomed to those trips, you know."

As she said this she looked through the window and Bertha mechanically followed her gaze, which wandered over to the other side of the market square to an open window with flowers on the sill. It was quite

calm, and the repose of a summer day shrouded the slumbering town. Bertha would have dearly liked to sit beside Frau Rupius and be kissed upon the brow by her, and blessed; but at the same time she had a feeling of compassion towards her. All this puzzled her. For what reason, indeed, had she really come? And what should she say to her?… "I'm going to-morrow to Vienna to see the man who used to be in love with me when I was a girl?"… In what way did all that concern Frau Rupius? Would it really interest her in the very slightest degree? There she sat as if surrounded by something impenetrable; it was impossible to approach her. *She* could not approach her, that was the trouble. Of course, there was a word by means of which it was possible to find the way to her heart, only Bertha did not know it.

"Well, how is your little boy?" asked Frau Rupius, without taking her eyes off the flowers in the opposite window.

"He is going on as well as ever. He is very well-behaved, and is a marvellously good child!"

The last word she uttered with an intentional tenderness as though Frau
Rupius was to be won over by that means.

"Yes, yes," answered the latter, her tone implying that she knew he was good, and had not asked about that. "Have you a reliable nursemaid?" she added.

Bertha was somewhat astonished at the question.

"My maid has, of course, many other things to attend to besides her nurse's duties," she replied; "but I cannot complain of her. She is also a very good cook."

"It must be a great happiness to have such a boy," said Frau Rupius very drily, after a short interval of silence.

"It is, indeed, my only happiness," said Bertha, more loudly than was necessary.

It was an answer which she had often made before, but she knew that, on that day, she was not speaking with entire sincerity. She felt the sheet of paper touch her skin, and, almost with alarm, she realized that she had also deemed it a happiness to have received that letter. At the same time it occurred to her that the woman sitting opposite her had neither a child nor even the prospect of having one, and Bertha would have been glad to take back what she had said. Indeed, she was on the point of seeking some qualifying word. But, as if Frau Rupius was able to see into her soul, and as if in her presence a lie was impossible, she said at once:

"Your only happiness? Say, rather, 'a great happiness,' and that is no small thing! I often envy you on that score, although I really think that, apart from such considerations, life in itself is a joy to you."

"Indeed, my life is so lonely, so…."

Anna smiled.

"Quite so, but I did not mean that. What I meant was that the fact that the sun is shining and the weather is now so fine also makes you glad."

"Oh yes, very glad!" replied Bertha assiduously. "My frame of mind is generally dependent on the weather. During that thunderstorm a few days ago I was utterly depressed, and then, when the storm was over __"

Frau Rupius interrupted her.

"That is the case with every one, you know."

Bertha grew low-spirited. She felt that she was not clever enough for Frau Rupius; she could never do any more than follow the ordinary lines of conversation, like the other women of her acquaintance. It seemed as though Frau Rupius had arranged an examination for her, which she had not passed, and, all at once, she was

seized with a great apprehension at the prospect of meeting Emil again. What sort of a figure would she cut in his presence? How shy and helpless she had become during the six years of her narrow existence in the little town!

Frau Rupius rose to her feet. The white morning gown streamed around her; she looked taller and more beautiful than usual, and Bertha was involuntarily reminded of an actress she had seen on the stage a very long time ago, and to whom at that moment Frau Rupius bore a remarkable resemblance. Bertha said to herself: If I were only like Frau Rupius I am sure I would not be so timid. At the same time it struck her that this exquisitely lovely woman was married to an invalid — might not the gossips be right then, after all? But here, again, she was unable to pursue further her train of thought; she could not imagine in what way the gossips could be right. And at that moment it dawned upon her mind how bitter was the fate to which Frau Rupius was condemned, no matter whether she now bore it or resisted it.

But, as if Anna had again read Bertha's thoughts, and could not tolerate that the latter should thus insinuate herself into her confidence, the uncanny gravity of her face relaxed suddenly, and she said in an innocent tone:

"Just fancy, my husband is still asleep. He has acquired the habit of remaining awake until late at night, reading and looking at engravings, and then he sleeps on until midday. As for that, it is quite a matter of habit; when I used to live in Vienna I was incredibly lazy about getting up."

And thereupon she began to chat about her girlhood, cheerfully, and with a confiding manner such as Bertha had never before noticed in her. She told about her father, who had been an officer on the Staff, about her mother, who had died when she was quite a young woman; and about the little house in the garden of which she had played as a child. It was only now that Bertha learned that Frau Rupius had first become acquainted with her husband when he was just a boy; he had lived with his parents in the adjoining house, and had fallen in love with Anna and she with him, while they were both children. To Bertha the whole period of Frau Rupius' youth appeared as if radiant with bright sunbeams, a youth replete with happiness, replete with hope; and it seemed to her, moreover, that Frau Rupius' voice assumed a fresher tone when she went on to relate about the travels which she and her husband had undertaken in the early days of their married life.

Bertha let her talk and hesitated to interrupt her with a word, as though she were a somnambulist wandering on the ridge of a roof. But while Frau Rupius was speaking of her past, a period through which the blessedness of being loved ever beamed brightly as its chiefest glory, Bertha's soul began to thrill with the hope of a happiness for herself such as she had not yet experienced. And while Frau Rupius was telling of the walking tours through Switzerland and the Tyrol, which she had once undertaken with her husband, Bertha pictured herself wandering by Emil's side on similar paths, and she was filled with such an immense yearning that she would dearly have liked at once to get up, go to Vienna, seek him out, fall into his arms, and at last, at last to taste those delights which had hitherto been denied her.

Her thoughts wandered so far that she did not notice that Frau Rupius had long since fallen silent, and was sitting on the sofa, staring at the flowers in the window of the house over the way. The utter stillness brought Bertha back to reality; the whole room seemed to her to be filled with some mysterious atmosphere, in which the past and the future were strangely intermingled. She felt that there existed an incomprehensible connexion between herself and Frau Rupius. She rose to her feet, stretched out her hand, and, as if it were quite a matter of course, the two ladies kissed each other good-bye like a couple of old friends.

On reaching the door Bertha remarked:

"I am going to Vienna again to-morrow for a few days."

She smiled as she spoke, like a girl about to be married.

After leaving Frau Rupius, Bertha went to her sister-in-law. Her nephew was already sitting at the piano, improvising in a very wild manner. He pretended not to have noticed her enter, and proceeded to practise his finger exercises, which he played in an attitude of stiffness, assumed for the occasion.

"We will play a duet to-day," said Bertha, endeavouring to find the volume of Schubert's marches.

She paid not the least attention to her own playing, and hardly noticed how, in using the pedals, her nephew touched her feet.

In the meantime Elly came into the room and kissed her aunt.

"Ah, just so, I had quite forgotten that!" said Richard, and, whilst continuing to play, he placed his lips close to Bertha's cheek.

Her sister-in-law came in with her bunch of keys rattling and a deep dejection on her pale and indistinct features.

"I have given Brigitta notice," she said in a feeble tone. "I couldn't endure it any longer."

"Shall I get you a maid in Vienna?" asked Bertha with a facility which even surprised her.

And now for the second time she told the fiction which she had invented about her cousin's invitation, with even greater assurance than before, and, moreover, with a little amplification this time. Along with the secret joy which she found in the telling, she felt her courage increasing at the same time. Even the possibility of being joined by her brother-in-law no longer alarmed her. She felt, too, that she had an advantage over him, because of the way in which he was in the habit of sidling up to her.

"How long are you thinking of staying in the town, then?" asked her sister-in-law.

"Two or three days; certainly no longer. And in any case, of course, I should have had to go on Monday — to the dressmaker."

Richard strummed on the keys, but Elly stood with both arms resting on the piano, gazing at her aunt with a look almost of terror.

"Whatever is the matter with you?" asked Bertha involuntarily.

"Why do you ask that?" said Elly.

"You are looking at me," said Bertha, "as queerly as though — well, as though you did not like the idea of missing your music lessons for a couple of days."

"No, it is not that," replied Elly, smiling. "But … no, I can't tell you."

"What is it, though?" asked Bertha.

"No, please, I really can't tell you."

She hugged her aunt, almost imploringly.

"Elly," said her mother, "I cannot permit you to have any secrets."

She sat down as though most deeply grieved and very tired.

"Well, Elly," said Bertha, filled with a vague fear, "if I were to beg you—"

"But you mustn't laugh at me, Aunt."

"Certainly not."

"Well, you see, Aunt, I was so frightened when you were away in Vienna that last time — I know very well it is silly — but it is because … because of the number of carriages in the streets."

Bertha drew a deep breath as of relief, and stroked Elly's cheeks.

"I will be sure to take great care. You can be quite easy in your mind."

Her sister-in-law shook her head.

"I am afraid that Elly will turn out a most eccentric girl."

Before Bertha left the house she arranged with her sister-in-law that she would come back to supper, and

that she would hand over Fritz to the care of her relations while she as away in Vienna.

After dinner, Bertha sat down at the writing table, read over Emil's letter a few more times, and made a rough draft of her reply.

"My Dear Emil,

"It was very good of you to answer me so soon. I was very happy" — she crossed out "very happy" and substituted "very glad"— "when I received your dear note. How much has changed since we last saw each other! You have become a famous virtuoso since then, which I, for my part, was always quite sure that you would be" — she stopped and struck out the whole sentence— "I also share your desire to see me soon again" — no, that was mere nonsense! This was better: "I should be immensely delighted to have an opportunity of talking to you once more." — Then an excellent idea occurred to her, and she wrote with great zest: "It is really strange that we have not met for so long, for I come to Vienna quite often; for instance, I shall be there this week-end…." Then she allowed her pen to drop and fell into thought. She was determined to go to Vienna the next afternoon, to put up at an hotel, and to sleep there, so as to be quite fresh the following day, and to breathe the air of Vienna for a few hours before meeting him. The next question was to fix a meeting place. That was easily done. "In accordance with your kind wish I am writing to let you know that on Saturday morning at eleven o'clock…." No, that was not the right thing! It was so businesslike, and yet again too eager— "if," she wrote, "you would really care to take the opportunity of seeing your old friend again, then perhaps you will not consider it too much trouble to go to the Art and History Museum on Saturday morning at eleven o'clock. I will be in the gallery of the Dutch School" — as she wrote that she seemed to herself rather impressive and, at the same time, everything of a suspicious nature seemed to be removed.

* * * * *

She read over the draft. It appeared to her rather dry, but, after all, it contained all that was necessary, and did not compromise her in any way. Whatever else was to happen would take place in the Museum, in the Dutch gallery.

She neatly copied out the draft, signed it, placed it in an envelope, and hurried down the sunny street to post the letter in the nearest box. On arriving home again she slipped off her dress, donned a dressing-gown, sat down on the sofa, and turned over the leaves of a novel by Gerstacker, which she had read half a score of times already. But she was unable to take in a word. At first, she attempted to dismiss from her mind the thoughts which beset her, but her efforts met with no success.

She felt ashamed of herself, but all the time she kept dreaming that she was in Emil's arms. Why ever did such dreams come to her? She had never, even for a moment, thought of such a thing! No, … she would not think of it, either … she was not that sort of woman…. No, she could not be anyone's mistress — and even on this occasion…. Yes, perhaps if she were to go to Vienna once more and again … and again … yes, much later — perhaps. And besides, he would not even so much as dare to speak of such a thing, or even to hint at it…. It was, however, useless to reason like this; she could no longer think of anything else. Ever more importunate came her dreams and, in the end, she gave up the struggle. She lolled indolently in the corner of the sofa, allowed the book to slip from her fingers and lie on the floor, and closed her eyes.

When she rose to her feet an hour later a whole night seemed to have passed, and the visit to Frau Rupius seemed, in particular, to be far distant. Again she wondered at this confusion of time — in truth, the hours appeared to be longer or shorter just as they chose.

She dressed in order to take Fritz for a walk. She was in the tired, indifferent mood which usually came

over her after an unaccustomed afternoon nap. It was that mood in which it is scarcely possible to collect one's thoughts with any degree of completeness, and in which the usual appears strange, but as though it refers to some one else. For the first time, it seemed strange to Bertha that the boy, whom she was now helping into his coat, was her own child, whose father had long been buried, and for whom she had endured the pangs of motherhood.

Something within her urged her to go to the cemetery again that day. She had not, however, the feeling that she had a wrong to make reparation for, but that she must again politely visit some one to whom she had become a stranger for no valid reason. She chose the way through the chestnut avenue. There the heat was particularly oppressive that day. When she passed out into the sun again a gentle breeze was blowing and the foliage of the trees in the cemetery seemed to greet her with a slight bow. As she passed through the cemetery gates with Fritz the breeze came towards her, cool, even refreshing. With a feeling of gentle, almost sweet, weariness, she walked through the broad centre avenue, allowed Fritz to run on in front, and did not mind when he disappeared from her sight for a few seconds behind a tombstone, though at other times she would not have allowed such behaviour. She remained standing before her husband's grave. She did not, however, look down at the flower-bed, as was her general custom, but gazed past the tombstone and away over the wall into the blue sky. She felt no tears in her eyes; she felt no emotion, no dread; she did not even realize that she had walked over the dead, and that there beneath her feet he, who had once held her in his arms, had crumbled into dust.

Suddenly she heard behind her hurried footsteps on the gravel, such as she was not generally accustomed to hear in the cemetery. Almost shocked, she turned round. Klingemann was standing before her, in an attitude of greeting, holding in his hand his straw hat, which was fixed by a ribbon to his coat button. He bowed deeply to Bertha.

"What a strange thing to see you here!" she said.

"Not at all, my dear lady, not at all! I saw you from the street; I recognized you by your walk."

He spoke in a very loud tone, and Bertha almost involuntarily murmured:

"Hush!"

A mocking smile at once made its appearance on Klingemann's face.

"He won't wake up," he muttered, between his clenched teeth.

Bertha was so indignant at this remark that she did not attempt to find an answer, but called Fritz, and was about to depart.

Klingemann, however, seized her by the hand.

"Stop," he whispered, gazing at the ground.

Bertha opened her eyes wide; she could not understand.

Suddenly Klingemann looked up from the ground and fixed his eyes on Bertha's.

"I love you, you see," he said.

Bertha uttered a low cry.

Klingemann let go her hand, and added in quite an easy conversational tone:

"Perhaps that strikes you as rather odd."

"It is unheard of! — unheard of!"

Once more she sought to go, and she called Fritz.

"Stop! If you leave me alone now, Bertha…." said Klingemann, now in a suppliant tone.

Bertha had recovered her senses again.

"Don't call me Bertha!" she said, vehemently. "Who gave you the right to do so? I have no wish to say

anything further to you … and here, of all places!" she added, with a downward glance, which, as it were, besought the pardon of the dead.

Meanwhile Fritz had come back. Klingemann seemed very disappointed.

"My dear lady," he said, following Bertha, who, holding Fritz by the hand, was slowly walking away: "I recognize my mistake. I should have begun differently and not said that which seems now to have frightened you, until I had come to the end of a well-turned speech."

Bertha did not look at him, but said, as though she were speaking to herself:

"I would not have considered it possible; I thought you were a gentleman…."

They were at the cemetery gate. Klingemann looked back again, and in his glance there was something of regret at not having been able to play out his scene at the graveside to a finish. Hat in hand, and twisting the ribbon, by which it was fastened, round his finger, and still keeping by Bertha's side, he went on to say:

"All I can do now is to repeat that I love you, that you pursue me in my dreams — in a word, you must be mine!"

Bertha came to a standstill again, as if she were terrified.

"You will, perhaps, consider my remarks insolent, but let us take things as they are. You" — he made a long pause— "are alone in the world. So am I—"

Bertha stared him full in the face.

"I know what you are thinking of," said Klingemann. "That is all of no consequence; that is all done with the moment you give the word. I have a dim presentiment that we two suit each other very well. Yes, unless I am very much deceived, the blood should be flowing in your veins, my dear lady, as warm…."

The glance which Bertha now gave him was so full of anger and loathing that Klingemann was unable to complete the sentence. He therefore began another.

"Ah, when you come to think of it, what sort of a life is it that I am now leading? It is even a long, long time since I was loved by a noble woman such as you are. I understand, of course, your hesitation, or rather, your refusal. Deuce take it, of course it needs a bit of courage — with such a disreputable fellow as I am, too … although, perhaps, things are not quite so bad. Ah, if I could only find a human soul, a kind, womanly soul!" — He emphasized the "womanly soul"— "Yes, my dear lady, it was as little meant to be my fate as it was yours to pine away and grow crabbed in such a hole of a town as this. You must not be offended if I … if I—"

The words began to fail him when he approached the truth. Bertha looked at him. He seemed to her at that moment to be rather ridiculous, almost pitiable, and very old, and she wondered how it was that he still had the courage, not so much as to propose to her, as even simply to court her favour.

And yet, to her own amazement and shame, there overflowed from these unseemly words of a man who appeared absurd to her, the surge, so to speak, of desire. And when his words had died away she heard them again in her mind — but as though from the lips of another who was waiting for her in Vienna — and she felt that she would not be able to withstand this other speaker. Klingemann continued to talk; he spoke of his life as being a failure, but yet a life worth saving. He said that women were to be blamed for bringing him so low, and that a woman could raise him up again. Away back in his student days he had run away with a woman, and that had been the beginning of his misfortunes. He talked of his unbridled passions, and Bertha could not restrain a smile. At the same time she was ashamed of the knowledge which seemed to her to be implied by the smile….

"I will walk up and down in front of your window this evening," said

Klingemann, when they reached the gate. “Will you play the piano?”

“I don’t know.”

“I will take it as a sign.”

With that he went away.

In the evening she supped, as she had so often done, at her brother-in-law’s house. At the table she sat between Elly and Richard. Mention was made of her approaching journey to Vienna as though it was really nothing more than a matter of paying a visit to her cousin, trying on the new costume at the dressmaker’s, and executing a few commissions in the way of household necessities, which she had promised to undertake for her sister-in-law. Towards the end of supper, her brother-in-law smoked his pipe, Richard read the paper to him, her sister-in-law knitted, and Elly, who had nestled up close beside Bertha, leaned her childish head upon her aunt’s breast. And Bertha, as her glance took in the whole scene, felt herself to be a crafty liar. She, the widow of a good husband, was sitting there in a family circle which interested itself in her welfare so loyally; by her side was a young girl who looked up at her as on an older friend. Hitherto she had been a good woman, honest and industrious, living only for her son. And now, was she not about to cast aside all these things, to deceive and lie to these excellent people, and to plunge into an adventure, the end of which she could foresee? What was it, then, that had come over her these last few days, by what dreams was she pursued, how was it that her whole existence seemed only to aspire towards the one moment when she would again feel the arms of a man about her? She had but to think of it and she was seized with an indescribable sensation of horror, during which she seemed devoid of will, as if she had fallen under the influence of some strange power.

And while the words that Richard was reading beat monotonously upon her ear, and her fingers played with the locks of Elly’s hair — she resisted for the last time; she resolved that she would be steadfast — that she would do no more than see Emil once again, and that, like her own mother who had died long ago, and like all the other good women she knew — her cousin in Vienna, Frau Mahlmann, Frau Martin, her sister-in-law, and … yes, certainly Frau Rupius as well — she would belong only to him who made her his wife. As soon, however, as she thought of that, the idea flashed through her mind, like lightning: if he himself…if Emil…. But she was afraid of the thought, and banished it from her. Not with such bold dreams as these would she go to meet Emil. He, the great artist, and she, a poor widow with a child…no, no! — she would see him once again … in the Museum of course, at the Dutch gallery … once only, and that for the last time, and she would tell him that she did not wish for anything else than to see him that once. With a smile of satisfaction she pictured to herself his somewhat disappointed face; and, as if practising beforehand for the scene, she knitted her brow and assumed a stern cast of countenance, and had the words ready on her lips to say to him: “Oh, no, Emil, if you think that….” But she must take care not to say it in quite too harsh a tone, in order that Emil might not, as on that previous occasion … twelve years before! … cease to plead after only the one attempt. She intended that he should beg a second time, a third time — ah, Heaven knew, she intended that he should continue to plead until she gave way…. For she felt, there in the midst of all those good, respectable, virtuous people, with whom, indeed, she would soon no longer be numbered, that she would give way the moment he first asked her. She was only going to Vienna to be *his*, and after that, if needs must be, to die.

On the afternoon of the following day Bertha set off. It was very hot, and the sun beat down upon the leather-covered seats of the railway carriage. Bertha had opened the window and drawn forward the yellow curtain, which, however, kept flapping in the breeze. She was alone. But she scarcely thought of the place

towards which she was travelling; she scarcely thought of the man whom she was about to see again, or of what might be in store for her — she thought only of the strange words she had heard, an hour before her departure. She would gladly have forgotten them, at least for the next few days. Why was it that she had been unable to remain at home during those few short hours between dinner and her departure? What unrest had driven her on this glowing hot afternoon out from her room, on to the street, into the market, and bade her pass Herr Rupius' house? He was sitting there upon the balcony, his eyes fixed on the gleaming white pavement, and over his knees, as usual, was spread the great plaid rug, the ends of which were hanging down between the bars of the balcony railings; in front of him was the little table with a bottle of water and a glass. When he perceived Bertha his eyes became fixed upon her, as though he were making some request to her, and she observed that he beckoned her with a slight movement of the head.

Why had she obeyed him? Why had she not taken his nod simply as a greeting and thanked him and gone upon her way? When, however, in answer to his nod, she turned towards the door of the house, she saw a smile of thanks glide over his lips and she found it still on his countenance when she went out to him on the balcony, through the cool, darkened room, and, taking his outstretched hand, sat down opposite to him on the other side of the little table.

"How are you getting on?" she asked.

At first he made no answer; then she observed from the working of his face that he wanted to say something, but seemed as if he was unable to utter a word.

"She is going to …" he broke out at length. These first words he uttered in an unnecessarily loud voice; then, as though alarmed at the almost shrieking tone, he added very softly: "My wife is going to leave me."

Bertha involuntarily looked around her.

Rupius raised his hands, as if to reassure her.

"She cannot hear us She is in her room; she is asleep."

Bertha was embarrassed.

"How do you know?…" she stammered. "It is impossible — quite impossible!"

"She is going away — away, for a time, as she says … for a time … do you understand?" "Why, yes, to her brother, I suppose."

"She is going away for ever … for ever! Naturally she does not like to say to me: Good-bye, you will never see me again! So she says: I should like to travel a little; I need a change; I will go to the lake for a few weeks; I should like to bathe; I need a change of air! Naturally she does not say to me: I can endure it no longer; I am young and in my prime and healthy; you are paralysed and will soon die; I have a horror of your affliction and of the loathsome state that must supervene before it is at an end. So she says: I will go away only for a few weeks, then I will come back again and stay with you."

Bertha's painful agitation became merged in her embarrassment.

"You are certainly mistaken," was all that she could answer.

Rupius hastily drew up the rug, which was on the point of slipping down off his knees. He seemed to find it chilly. As he continued to speak, he drew the rug higher and higher, until finally he held it with both hands pressed against her breast.

"I have seen it coming; for years I have seen this moment coming. Imagine what sort of an existence it has been; waiting for such a moment, defenceless and forced to be silent! — Why are you looking at me like that?"

"Oh, no," said Bertha, looking down at the market square.

"Well, I beg your pardon for referring to all this. I had no intention of doing so, but when I saw you

walking past — well, thank you very much for having listened to me."

"Please don't mention it," said Bertha, mechanically stretching out her hand to him. He did not notice it, however, and she let it lie upon the table.

"Now it is all over," said Herr Rupius; "now comes the time of loneliness, the time of dread."

"But has your wife … she loves you, I'm sure of it!… I am quite certain that you are giving yourself needless anxiety. Wouldn't the simplest course be, Herr Rupius, for you to request your wife to forego this journey?"

"Request?…" said Herr Rupius, almost majestically. "Can I pretend to have the right to do so? AH these last six or seven years have only been a favour which she has granted me. I beg you, consider it. During all these seven years not a word of complaint at the waste of her youth has passed her lips."

"She loves you," said Bertha, decisively; "and that is the chief point."

Herr Rupius looked at her for a long time.

"I know what is in your mind, although you do not venture to say it. But your husband, my dear Frau Bertha, lies deep in the grave, and does not sleep by your side night after night."

He looked up with a glance that seemed to ascend to Heaven as a curse.

Time was getting on; Bertha thought of her train.

"When is your wife going to start?"

"Nothing has been said about that yet — but I am keeping you, perhaps?"

"No, not at all, Herr Rupius, only…. Hasn't Anna told you? I'm going to
Vienna to-day, you know."

She grew burning red. Once more he gazed at her for a long time. It seemed to her as though he knew everything.

"When are you coming back?" he asked drily.

"In two or three days."

She would have liked to say that he was mistaken, that she was not going to see a man whom she loved, that all these things about which he was worrying were sordid and mean, and really of not the slightest importance to women — but she was not clever enough to find the right words to express herself.

"If you come back in two or three days' time you may, perhaps, find my wife still here. So, good-bye! I hope you will enjoy yourself."

She felt that his glance had followed her as she went through the dark, curtained room and across the market square. And now, too, as she sat in the railway carriage, she felt the same glance and still in her ears kept ringing those words, in which there seemed to lie the consciousness of an immense unhappiness, which she had not hitherto understood. The torment of this recollection seemed stronger than the expectation of any joys that might be awaiting her, and the nearer she approached to the great city the heavier she became at heart. As she thought of the lonely evening that lay before her she felt as though she were travelling, without hope, towards some strange, uncertain destination. The letter, which she still carried in her bodice, had lost its enchantment; it was nothing but a piece of crackling paper, filled with writing, the corners of which were beginning to get torn. She tried to imagine what Emil now looked like. Faces bearing a slight resemblance to his arose before her mind's eye; many times she thought that she had surely hit upon the right one, but it vanished immediately. Doubts began to assail her as to whether she had done the right thing in travelling so soon. Why had she not waited, at least, until Monday?

Then she was obliged, however, to confess to herself that she was going to Vienna to keep an appointment with a young man, with whom she had not exchanged a word for ten years, and who, perhaps, was expecting a quite different woman from the one who was travelling to see him on the morrow. Yes, that was the cause of all her uneasiness; she realized it now. The letter which was already beginning to chafe her delicate skin was addressed to Bertha, the girl of twenty; for Emil, of course, could not know what she looked like now. And, although for her own part, she could assure herself that her face still preserved its girlish features and that her figure, though grown fuller, still preserved the contours of youth, might he not see, in spite of all, how many changes a period of ten years had wrought in her, and, perhaps, even destroyed without her having noticed it herself?

The train drew up at Klosterneuburg. Bertha's ears were assailed by the sound of many clear voices and the clatter of hurrying footsteps. She looked out of the window. A number of schoolboys crowded up to the train and, laughing and shouting, got into the carriages. The sight of them caused Bertha to call to mind the days of her childhood, when her brothers used to come back from picnics in the country, and suddenly there came before her eyes a vision of the blue room in which the boys had slept. She seemed to feel a tremor run through her as she realized how all the past was scattered to the wind; how those to whom she owed her existence had died, how those with whom she had lived for years under one roof were forgotten; how friendships which had seemed to have been formed to last for ever had become dissolved. How uncertain, how mortal, everything was!

And he … he had written to her as if in the course of those ten years nothing had changed, as if in the meantime there had not been funerals, births, sorrows, illnesses, cares and — for him, at least — so much good fortune and fame. Involuntarily she shook her head. A kind of perplexity in the face of so much that was incomprehensible came over her. Even the roaring of the train, which was carrying her along to unknown adventures, seemed to her as a chant of remarkable sadness. Her thoughts went back to the time, by no means remote, in fact no more than a few days earlier, when she had been tranquil and contented, and had borne her existence without desire, without regret and without wonder. However had it happened that this change had come over her? She could not understand.

The train seemed to rush forward with ever-increasing speed towards its destination. Already she could see the smoke of the great city rising skywards as out of the depths. Her heart began to throb. She felt as if she was awaited by something vague, something for which she could not find a name, a thing with a hundred arms, ready to embrace her. Each house she passed knew that she was coming; the evening sun, gleaming on the roofs, shone to meet her; and then, as the train rolled into the station, she suddenly felt sheltered. Now for the first time, she realized that she was in Vienna, in *her* Vienna, the town of her youth and of her dreams, that she was home. Had she not given the slightest thought to that before? She did not come from home — no, now she had arrived home. The din at the station filled her with a feeling of comfort, the bustle of people and carriages gladdened her, everything that was sorrowful had been shed from her.

There she stood at the Franz Josef Station in Vienna, on a warm May evening, Bertha Garlan, young and pretty, free and accountable to no one, and on the morrow she was to see the only man whom she had ever loved — the lover who had called her.

She put up at a little hotel near the station. She had determined to choose one of the less fashionable, partly for the sake of economy, and partly, too, because she stood in awe, to a certain extent, of smart waiters and porters. She was shown to a room on the third floor with a window looking out on the street. The chambermaid closed the window when the visitor entered, and brought some fresh water, the boots placed her box beside the stove, and the waiter placed before her the registration paper, which Bertha filled up

immediately and unhesitatingly, with the pride that comes of a clear conscience.

A feeling of freedom as regards external circumstances, such as she had not known for a long time, encompassed her; there were none of the petty domestic cares of the daily round, there was no obligation to talk to relations or acquaintances; she was at liberty that evening to do just as she liked.

When she had changed her dress she opened the window. She had already been obliged to light the candles, but out of doors it was not yet quite dark. She leaned her elbows on the window-sill and looked down. Again she remembered her childhood, when she had often looked down out of the windows in the evenings, sometimes with one of her brothers, who had thrown his arm around her shoulders. She also thought of her parents with so keen an emotion that she was on the verge of tears.

Down below the street lamps were already alight. Well, at all events, she must find something to do. She thought of what might be happening the next day at that hour…. She could not picture it to herself. At that moment, it just happened that a lady and gentleman drove by the hotel in a cab. If things turned out in accordance with her wishes, Emil and she should be going for a drive together into the country the next morning — yes, that would be nicest. Some quiet spot away from the town in a restaurant garden, a candle lamp on the table, and he beside her, hand in hand like a pair of young lovers. And then back again — and then…. No, she would rather not imagine anything further! Where was he now, she wondered. Was he alone? Or was he at that very instant engaged in talking with some one? And with whom — a man? — a woman? — a girl? But, after all, was it any concern of hers? For the present it was certainly not any concern of hers. And to Emil it mattered just as little that Herr Klingemann had proposed to her the previous day, that Richard, her precocious nephew, kissed her sometimes, and that she had a great admiration for Herr Rupius. She would be sure to ask him on the morrow — yes, she must be certain as regards all these points before she … well, before she went with him in the evening into the country.

So then she decided to go out — but where? She stopped, irresolute, at the door. All she could do was to go for a short walk and then have supper … but again, where? A lady alone…. No, she would have supper here in her room at the hotel, and go to bed early so that she might have a good night's rest and look fresh, young and pretty in the morning.

She locked the door and went out into the street. She turned towards the inner town, and proceeded at a very sharp pace, for she did not like walking alone in the evening. Soon she reached the Ring and went past the University, and on to the Town Hall. But she took no pleasure at all in this aimless rambling. She felt bored and hungry, and went back to her hotel in a tramcar. She had no great desire to seek her room. From the street she had already noticed that the dining-room of the hotel was barely lighted and evidently empty. She had supper there, after which she grew tired and sleepy and, with an effort, went up the three flights of stairs to her room. As she sat on the bed and undid her shoe laces, she heard ten o'clock chime in a neighbouring church steeple.

When she awoke in the morning she hurried, first of all, to the window and drew up the blinds with a great longing to see the daylight and the town. It was a sunny morning, and the air was as fresh as if it had come flowing down from a thousand springs in the forests and hills into the streets of the town. The beauty of the morning acted on Bertha as a good omen; she wondered at the strange, foolish manner in which she had spent the previous evening — as if she had not quite correctly understood why she had come to Vienna. The certainty that the repose of a whole night no longer separated her from the longed-for hour filled her with a sense of great gladness. All at once, she could no longer understand how it was that she could have come to Vienna, as she had done just recently, without daring to make even an attempt to see Emil. Finally, too, she wondered how it was that she had, for weeks, months, perhaps years, needlessly deferred availing herself of

the opportunity of seeing him. The fact that she had scarcely thought of him during the whole time, did not occur to her at first, but, when at length she did realize it, she was amazed at that, most of all.

At last only four more hours were to be endured, and then she would see him. She lay down on the bed again; she reclined, at first, with her eyes wide open, and she whispered to herself, as though she wanted to intoxicate herself with the words: "Come soon!" She heard Emil himself speak the words, no longer far away, no, but as though he were close by her side. His lips breathed them on hers: "Come soon!" he said, but the words meant: "Be mine! be mine!" She opened her arms as though making ready to press her beloved to her heart. "I love you," she said, and breathed a kiss into the air.

At length she got up and dressed. This time she had brought with her a simple grey costume, cut in the English fashion, which, according to the general opinion of her friends, suited her very well, and she was quite content with herself when she had completed her toilet. She probably did not look like a fashionable lady of Vienna, but, on the other hand, she had not the appearance of a fashionable lady from the country either; it seemed to her that she looked more like a governess in the household of some Count or Prince, than anything else. Indeed, as a matter of fact, there was something of the young, unmarried lady in her aspect; no one would have taken her for a married woman and the mother of a five-year-old boy. She thought, with a slight sigh, that truly she would have done better to have remained unmarried. But, as to that, she was feeling that day very much like a bride.

Nine o'clock! Still two long hours to wait! What could she do in the meantime? She sat down at the table, ordered coffee and sipped it slowly. There was no sense in remaining indoors any longer; it was better to go out into the open air at once.

For a time she walked about the streets of the suburb, and she took a particularly keen pleasure in the wind blowing on her cheeks. She asked herself: What was Fritz doing at that moment? Probably Elly was playing with him. Bertha took the road which led towards the public gardens; she was glad to go for a walk through the avenues, in which, many years ago, she had played as a child. She entered the garden by the gate opposite the Burg-theatre. At that early hour of the day there were but few people in the gardens. Children were playing on the gravel; governesses and nursemaids were sitting on the seats; little girls were running about along the steps of the Temple of Theseus and under its colonnade. Elderly people were walking in the shade of the avenues; young men, who were apparently studying from large writing books, and ladies, who were reading books, had taken their seats in the cool shade of the trees.

Bertha sat on a seat and watched two little girls who were jumping over a piece of string, as she had so often done herself, when a child — it seemed to her, in just the same spot. A gentle breeze blew through the foliage; from afar she heard the calls and laughter of some children playing "catch." The cries came nearer and nearer; and then the children ran trooping past her. She felt a thrill of pleasure when a young man in a long overcoat walked slowly by and turned round to look at her for a second time, when he reached the end of the avenue. Then there passed by a young couple; the girl, who had a roll of music in her hand, was neatly but somewhat strikingly dressed; the man was clean-shaven and was wearing a light summer suit and a tall hat. Bertha thought herself most experienced when she fancied that she was able with certainty to recognize in the girl a student of music, and in her companion a young man who had just gone on the stage. It was very pleasant to be sitting there, to have nothing to do, to be alone, and to have people walking, running and playing like this before her. Yes, it would be nice to live in Vienna and be able to do just as she liked. Well, who could say how everything would turn out, what the next few hours would bring forth, what prospects for her future life that evening would open out before her? What was it then, that really forced her to live in that dreadful little town? After all, in Vienna she would be able to supplement her income by giving music lessons

just as easily as at home. Why not, indeed? Moreover, in Vienna, better terms were to be obtained for music lessons…. Ah, what an idea!… if he came to her aid; if he, the famous musician, recommended her? Why, certainly it would only need one word from him. What if she were to speak to him on the subject? And would it not also be a most advantageous arrangement in view of her child? In a few years' time he would have to go to school, and then, of course, the schools were so much better in Vienna than at home. No, it was quite impossible for her to pass all her life in the little town — she would have to move to Vienna, and that, too, at no distant date. Moreover, even if she had to economise here, and — and…. In vain she attempted to restrain the bold thoughts which now came rushing along…. If she should take Emil's fancy, if he should again … if he should still be in love with her … if he should ask her to be his wife? If she could be a bit clever, if she avoided compromising herself in any way, and understood how to fascinate him — she felt rather ashamed of her craftiness. But, after all, was it so bad that she should think of such things, considering that she was really in love with him, and had never loved any other man but him? And did not the whole tone of his letter give her the right to indulge in such thoughts?

And then, when she realised that in a few minutes she was to meet him who was the object of her hopes, everything began to dance before her eyes. She rose to her feet, and nearly reeled. She saw the young couple, who had previously walked past her, leave the gardens by the road leading to the Burgplatz. She went off in the same direction. Yonder, she saw the dome of the Museum, towering and gleaming. She decided to walk slowly, so as not to appear too excited or even breathless when she met him. Once more she was seized with a thrill of fear — suppose he should not come? But whatever happened, she would not leave Vienna this time without seeing him.

Would it not, perhaps, even be better if he did not come, she wondered. She was so bewildered at that moment … and supposing she was to say anything silly or awkward…. So much depended on the next few minutes — perhaps her whole future….

There was the Museum before her. Up the steps, through the entrance, and she was standing in the large, cool vestibule. Before her eyes was the grand staircase and, yonder, where it divided to right and left, was the colossal marble statue of Theseus slaying the Minotaur. Slowly she ascended the stairs and, as she looked round about her, she grew calmer. The magnificence of her surroundings captivated her. She looked up at the galleries which, with their golden railings, ran round the interior of the dome. She came to a stop. Before her was a door, above which appeared in gilt letters: "Dutch School."

Her heart gave a sudden convulsive throb. Before her eyes lay the row of picture galleries. Here and there she saw people standing before the pictures. She entered the first hall, and gazed attentively at the first picture hanging at the very entrance. She thought of Herr Rupius' portfolio. And then she heard a voice say:

"Good morning, Bertha."

VI



IT WAS HIS voice. She turned round. He was standing before her, young, slim, elegant and rather pale. In his smile there was a suggestion of mockery. He nodded to Bertha, took her hand at the same time, and held it for a while in his own. It was Emil himself, and it was exactly as if the last occasion on which they had spoken to one another had been only the previous day.

"Good morning, Emil," she said.

They gazed at each other. His glance was expressive of much: pleasure, amiability, and something in the nature of a scrutiny. She realised all this with perfect clearness, whilst she gazed at him with eyes in which nothing but pure happiness was shining.

"Well, then, how are you getting on, Bertha?" he asked.

"Quite well."

"It is really funny that I should ask you such a question after eight or nine years. Things have probably gone very differently with you."

"Yes, indeed, that's true. You know, of course, that my husband died three years ago."

She felt obliged to assume an expression of sorrow.

"Yes, I know that, and I know, too, that you have a boy. Let me see, who could it have been that told me?"

"I wonder who?"

"Well, it'll come back to me presently. It is new to me, though, that you are interested in pictures."

Bertha smiled.

"Well, it wasn't really on account of the pictures alone. But you mustn't think that I am quite so silly as all that. I do take an interest in pictures."

"And so do I. If the truth must be told, I think I would rather be a painter than anything else."

"Yet you ought to be quite satisfied with what you have attained."

"Well, that's a question that can't be disposed of in one word. Of course, I find it a very pleasant thing to be able to play the violin so well, but what does it all lead to? Only to this, I think: that when I am dead my name will endure for a short time. That—" his eyes indicated the picture before which they were standing—"that, on the other hand, is something different."

"You are awfully ambitious, Emil!"

He looked at her, but without evincing the slightest interest in her.

"Ambitious? Well, it is not such a simple matter as all that. But let's talk about something else. What a strange idea to indulge in a theoretical conversation on the subject of art, when we haven't seen each other for a hundred years! So come, then, Bertha, tell me something about yourself! What do you do with yourself at home? How do you live? And what really put it into your head to congratulate me on getting that silly Order?"

She smiled a second time.

"I wanted to write to you again," she answered; "and, chiefly, I wanted to hear something of you once more; It was really very good of you to answer my letter at once."

"Good? Not at all, my child! I was so pleased when, all of a sudden, your letter came — I recognised your writing at once. You know, you still have the same schoolgirl writing as…. Well, let us say, as in the old days, although I can't bear such expressions."

“But why?” she asked, somewhat astonished.

He looked at her, and then said in a rapid voice:

“Well, tell me, how do you live? You must generally get very bored,
I’m sure.”

“I haven’t much time for that,” she replied gravely. “I give lessons, you must know.”

“Oh!”

His tone was one of such disproportionate pity that she felt constrained to add quickly:

“Oh, not because there is really any pressing need for me to do so — although, of course, I find it very useful, because …” she felt that it would be best to be quite frank with him … “I could scarcely live on the slender means that I possess.”

“What is it, then, that you are actually a teacher of?”

“What! Didn’t I tell you that I give piano lessons?”

“Piano lessons? Really? Yes, of course … you used to be very talented. If you hadn’t left the Conservatoire when you did … well, of course, you would not have become one of the great pianistes, you know, but for certain things you had quite a pronounced aptitude. For instance, you used to play Chopin and the little things of Schumann very prettily.”

“You still remember that?”

“After all, I dare say that you have chosen the better course.”

“In what way?”

“Well, if it is impossible to master everything, it is better, no doubt, to get married and have children.”

“I have only one child.”

He laughed.

“Tell me something about him, and all about your own life in general.”

They sat down on the divan in the little saloon on front of the
Rembrandts.

“What have I to tell you about myself? There is nothing in it of the slightest interest. Rather, you tell me about yourself” — she looked at him with admiration— “things have gone so splendidly with you, you are such a celebrated man, you see!”

Emil twitched his underlip very slightly, as if discontented.

“Why, yes,” she continued, undaunted; “quite recently I saw your portrait in an illustrated paper.”

“Yes, yes,” he said impatiently.

“But I always knew that you would make a name for yourself,” she added. “Do you still remember how you played the Mendelssohn Concerto at that final examination at the Conservatoire? Everybody said the same thing then.”

“I beg you, my dear girl, don’t, please, let us have any more of these mutual compliments! Tell me, what sort of a man was your late husband?”

“He was a good; indeed, I might say noble, man.”

“Do you know, though, that I met your father about eight days before he died?”

“Did you really?”

“Didn’t you know?”

“I am certain he didn’t tell me anything about it.”

“We stood chatting with one another in the street for a quarter of an hour, perhaps. I had just returned then from my first concert tour.”

“Not a word did he tell me — not a single word!”

She spoke almost angrily, as though her father had, at that time, neglected something that might have shaped her future life differently.

“But why didn’t you come to see us in those days?” she continued. “How did it happen at all that you had already suddenly ceased to visit us some considerable time before my father’s death?”

“Suddenly? — Gradually!”

He looked at her a long time; and now his eyes glided down over her whole body, so that she mechanically drew in her feet under her dress, and pressed her arms against her body, as though to defend herself.

“Well, how did it happen that you came to get married?”

She related the whole story. Emil listened to her, apparently with attention, but as she spoke on and remained seated, he rose to his feet and gazed out through the window…. When she had finished with a remark about the good-nature of her relations, he said:

“Don’t you think that we ought to look at a few pictures now that we are here in the Museum?”

They walked slowly through the galleries, stopping here and there before a picture.

“Lovely! Exquisite!” commented Bertha many a time, but Emil only nodded.

It seemed to Bertha that he had quite forgotten that he was with her. She felt slightly jealous at the interest which the paintings roused in him. Suddenly they found themselves before one of the pictures which she knew from Herr Rupius’ portfolio. Emil wanted to pass on, but she stopped and greeted it, as she might an old acquaintance.

“Exquisite!” she exclaimed. “Emil, isn’t it beautiful? On the whole, I greatly admire Falckenborg’s pictures.”

He looked at her, somewhat surprised.

She became embarrassed, and tried to go on talking.

“Because such an immense quantity — because the whole world—”

She felt that this was dishonest, even that she was robbing some one who could not defend himself; and accordingly she added, repentantly, as it were:

“You must know, there’s a man living in our little town who has an album, or rather a portfolio, of engravings, and that’s how I know the picture. His name is Rupius, he is very infirm; just fancy, he is quite paralysed.”

She felt obliged to tell Emil all this, for it seemed to her as though his eyes were unceasingly questioning her.

“That might be a chapter, too,” he said, with a smile, when she had come to an end; then he added more softly, as though ashamed of his indelicate joke: “There must certainly also be gentlemen in that little town who are not paralysed.”

She felt that she had to take poor Herr Rupius under her protection.

“He is a very unhappy man,” she said, and, remembering how she had sat with him on the balcony the previous day, a feeling of great compassion seized her.

But Emil was following his own train of thought.

“Yes,” he said; “that is what I should really like to know — what experiences you have had.”

“You know them, already.”

“I mean, since the death of your husband.”

She understood now what he meant, and was a little offended.

“I live only for my boy,” she said, with decision. “I do not allow men to make love to me. I am quite respectable.”

He had to laugh it the comically serious way in which she made this confession of virtue. For her part, she felt at once that she ought to have expressed herself differently, and so she laughed, too.

“How long are you going to stay, then, in Vienna?” asked Emil.

“Till to-morrow, or the day after to-morrow.”

“So short a time as that? And where are you staying? I should like to know.”

“With my cousin,” she replied.

Something restrained her from mentioning that she had put up at an hotel. But immediately she was angry with herself for having told such a stupid lie, and she was about to correct herself. Emil, however, broke in quickly:

“Perhaps you will have a little time to spare for me, too? I hope so, at least.”

“Oh, yes!”

“So, then, we can arrange something now if you like” — he glanced at the clock— “Ah!”

“Must you go?” she asked.

“Yes, by twelve o’clock I ought really to….”

She was seized with an intense uneasiness at the prospect of having to be alone again so soon, and she said:

“I have plenty of time — as much as you like. But, of course, it must not be too late.”

“Is your cousin so strict then?”

“But—” she said, “this time, as a matter of fact, I’m not staying with her, you see.”

He looked at her in astonishment.

She grew red.

“Usually I do stay with her…. I mean, sometimes…. She has such a large family, you know.”

“So you are staying at an hotel,” he said, rather impatiently. “Well, there, of course, you are accountable to no one, and we can spend the evening together quite comfortably.”

“I shall be delighted. But I should like not to be too late … even in an hotel I should like not to be too late….”

“Of course not. We will just have supper, and you can be in bed long before ten o’clock.”

They paced slowly down the grand staircase.

“So, if you are agreeable,” said Emil, “we will meet at seven o’clock.”

She was on the point of replying: “So late as that?” — but, remembering her resolution not to compromise herself, she refrained and answered instead:

“Very well, at seven.”

“Seven o’clock at … where?… Out of doors, shall we say? In that case we could go wherever we fancied, life would lie before us, so to speak … yes.”

He seemed to her just then remarkably absent-minded. They went through the entrance hall, and at the exit they stopped for a moment.

“At seven o’clock, then — by the Elizabeth Bridge.”

“Very well; seven o’clock at the Elizabeth Bridge.”

Before them lay the square, with the Maria Theresa memorial, in the brilliant glare of the noonday sun. It

was a warm day, but a very high wind had arisen. It seemed to Bertha that Emil was looking at her with a scrutinising glance. At the same time, he appeared to her cold and strange, a very different man from what he had been when standing before the pictures in the Museum.

"Now we will say good-bye for the present," he said, after a time.

It made her feel somewhat unhappy to think that he was going to leave her.

"Won't you … or can't I come with you a little way?" she said.

"Well, no," he answered. "Besides, it is blowing such a gale. There's not much enjoyment to be had in walking side by side and having to hold your hat all the time, for fear it should blow away. Generally, it is difficult to converse if you are walking with a person in the street, and then, too, I have to be in such a hurry…. But perhaps I can see you to a carriage?"

"No, no, I shall walk."

"Yes, you can do that. Well, good-bye till we meet again this evening."

He stretched out his hand to her, and walked quickly away across the square. She gazed after him for a long time. He had taken off his hat and held it in his hand, and the wind was ruffling his hair. He went across the Ring, then through the Town Gate, and disappeared from Bertha's view.

Mechanically, and very slowly, she had followed him. Why had he suddenly grown so cold? Why had he taken his departure so quickly? Why didn't he want her to accompany him? Was he ashamed of her? She looked down at herself, wondering whether she was not dressed, after all, in a countrified and ridiculous manner. Oh, no, it could not be that! Moreover, she had been able to remark from the way in which people gazed at her that she was not looking ludicrous, but, on the contrary, decidedly pretty. Why, then, this sudden departure? She called to mind the period of their previous acquaintance, and it seemed to her that she could remember his having this strange manner even then. He would break off a conversation quite unexpectedly, whilst he suddenly became as though his thoughts had been carried away, and his whole being expressed an impatience which he could not master.

Yes, she was certain that he had been like that in those days also, though, perhaps, less strikingly so than now. She remembered, as well, that she had sometimes make jokes on the subject of his capriciousness, and had laid the responsibility at the door of his artistic temperament. Since then he had become a greater artist, and certainly more absent and irresponsible than ever.

The chimes of noon rang out from many a spire, the wind grew higher and higher, dust flew into her eyes. She had a whole eternity before her, with which she did not know what to do. Why wouldn't he see her, then, until seven o'clock? Unconsciously, she had reckoned on his spending the whole day with her. What was it that he had to do? Had he, perhaps, to make his preparations for the concert? And she pictured him to herself, violin in hand, by a cabinet, or leaning on a piano, just as, many years ago, he had played before the company at her home. Yes, that would be nice if she could only be with him now, sitting in his room, on a sofa, while he played, or even accompanying him on the piano. Would she, then, have gone with him if he had asked her? Why hadn't he asked her? No, of course, he could not have done so within an hour of seeing her again…. But in the evening — wouldn't he ask her that evening? And would she go with him? And, if she went, would she be able to deny him anything else that he might ask her? Indeed, he had a way of expressing everything so innocently. How easily he had managed to make those ten years seem as nothing! Had he not spoken to her as if they had seen each other daily all that time? "Good morning, Bertha. How are you, then?" — just as he might have asked if, on the previous evening, he had wished her "Good night!" and said "Good-bye till we meet again!" What a number of experiences he must have had since then! And who could tell who might be sitting on the sofa in his room that afternoon, while he leaned against the piano and played the violin? Ah, no,

she would not think of it. If she followed up such thoughts to the end, would she not simply have to go home again?

She walked past the railings of the public gardens, and could see the avenue where, an hour ago, she had sat, and through which clouds of dust were now sweeping. So, then, that for which she had so deeply yearned was over — she had seen Emil again. Had it been so lovely as she expected? Had she felt any particular emotion when walking by his side, his arm touching hers? No! Had his departure put her out of humour? Perhaps. Would she be able to go home again without seeing him once more? Good heavens, no! And a sensation almost of terror thrilled through her at the thought. Had not, then, her life during the past few days been, as it were, obsessed by him? And all the years that lay behind her, had they been meant for anything else, at all, than to lead her back to him at the right moment? Ah, if she only had a little more experience, if she were a little more worldly-wise! She would have liked to possess the capability of marking out for herself a definite course.

She asked herself which would be the wiser — to be reserved or yielding? She would gladly have known what she was to do that evening, what she ought to do in order to win his heart with greater certainty. She felt that any move on her part, one way or the other, might have the effect of gaining him, or, just as well, of losing him. But she also realised that all her meditation was of no avail, and that she would do just as he wished.

She was in front of the Votive Church, a spot where many streets intersected. The wind there was so violent as to be altogether intolerable. It was time to dine. But she decided that she would not go back to the little hotel that day. She turned towards the inner town. It suddenly occurred to her that she might meet her cousin, but that was a matter of supreme indifference to her. Or, supposing that her brother-in-law had followed her to Vienna? But that thought did not worry her either in the least. She had a feeling, such as she had never experienced before, that she had the right to dispose of her person and her time just as she pleased. She strolled leisurely along the streets, and amused herself by looking at the shop windows. On the Stephansplatz the idea came to her to go into the church for a while. In the dim, cool, and immense building a profound sensation of comfort came over her. She had never been of a religious disposition, but she could never enter a place of worship without experiencing a devotional feeling and, without clothing her prayers in definite form, she had yet always thought to find a way to send up her wishes to Heaven. At first she wandered round the church in the manner of a stranger visiting a beautiful edifice, then she sat down in a pew before a small altar in a side chapel.

She called to mind the day on which she had been married, and she had a vision of her late husband and herself standing side by side before the priest — but the event seemed to be so infinitely far away in the past, and it affected her spirit as little as if her thoughts were occupied by strangers. But suddenly, as a picture changed in a magic lantern, she seemed to see Emil, instead of her husband, standing by her side, and the picture appeared to stand out so completely, without any co-operation on the part of her will, that she almost had to regard as a premonition, even as a prediction from Heaven itself. Mechanically, she folded her hands and said softly: “So be it.” And, as though her will acquired thereby a further access of strength, she remained sitting in a pew a while longer and sought to hold the picture fast.

After a few minutes she went out again into the street, where the broad daylight and the din of the traffic affected her as something new, something which she had not experienced for a long time, as though she had spent whole hours in the church. She felt tranquil, and hopes seemed to hover about her.

She dined in the restaurant of a fashionable hotel in the Kaernthernstrasse…. She was not in the least embarrassed, and thought it very childish that she had not preferred to put up at a first-class hotel. On

reaching her room again, she undressed and, such was the state of languor into which she had fallen as the result of the unusually rich meal and the wine she had taken, that she had to stretch herself out on the sofa and fall asleep. It was five o'clock before she awoke. She had no great desire to get up. Usually at that time … what would she probably have been doing at that moment if she had not come to Vienna? If he had not answered her letter — if she had not written to him? If he had not received that Order? If she had never seen his portrait in the illustrated paper? If nothing had called his existence back into her memory? If he had become an insignificant, unknown fiddler in some suburban orchestra? What strange thoughts were these! Did she, then, love him merely because he was celebrated? What did it all mean? Did she, indeed, take any interest in his violin playing? … Wouldn't he be dearer to her if he was not famous and admired? Certainly in that case she would have felt herself much nearer to him, much more allied to him; in that case, she would not have had this feeling of uncertainty about him, and also he would have been different in his manner towards her. As it was, of course, he was, indeed, very charming, and yet … she realized it now … something had come between them that day and had sundered them. Yes, and that was nothing else than the fact that he was a man whom the whole world knew, and she was nothing but a stupid little woman from the country. Suddenly she pictured him to herself as he had stood in the Rembrandt gallery at the Museum, and had looked out of the window while she had been telling him the story of her life in the little town; she remembered how he had scarcely bidden her good-bye, and how he had gone away from her, indeed, absolutely fled away from her. But, then, had she herself felt any emotion such as a woman would feel in the presence of the man she loved? Had she been happy when he had been speaking to her? Had she longed to kiss him when he was standing beside her?… Not at all. And now — was she pleased at the prospect of the evening she was going to spend with him? Was she pleased at the idea of seeing him again in a couple of hours? If she had the power, simply by expressing the wish, to transport herself just where she pleased, would she not, perhaps, at that, moment, rather be at home, with her boy, walking between the vine-trellises, without fear, without agitation, and with a clear conscience; as a good mother and a respectable woman, instead of lying in that uncomfortable room in the hotel, on a miserable sofa, restlessly, yet without longing, awaiting the next hours? She thought of the time, still so near, when all her concern was for nothing save her boy, the household, and her lessons — had she not been contented, almost happy?…

She looked round her. The bare room with the ugly blue and white painted walls, the specks of dust and dirt on the ceiling, the cabinet with its half-open door, all seemed most repulsive to her. No, that was no place for her. Then she thought with displeasure, too, of the dinner in the fashionable hotel, and also of her strolling about in the town, her weariness, the wind and the dust. It seemed to her that she had been wandering about like a tramp. Then another thought came to her: what if something had happened at home! — Fritz might have caught the fever; they would telegraph to her cousin at Vienna, or they might even come to look for her, and they would not be able to find her, and all would know that she had lied like any disreputable person whose purpose it suits to do so…. It was terrible! How could she face them at home, her sister-in-law, her brother-in-law, Elly, her grown-up nephew Richard … the whole town, which, of course, would hear the news at once…. Herr Rupius! No, in good truth, she was not intended for such things! How childishly and clumsily, after all, she had set about it, so that only the slightest accident was needed to betray her. Had she, then, failed to give the least thought to all these things? Had she only been obsessed with the idea of seeing Emil once more, and for that had hazarded everything … her good name, even her whole future! For who could say whether the family would not renounce her, and she would lose her music lessons, if the truth came out?… The truth…. But what could come out? What had happened, then? What had she to reproach herself with? And with the comforting feeling of a clear conscience she was able boldly to answer: "Nothing." And,

of course, there was still time…. She could leave Vienna directly by the seven o'clock train, be back by ten in her own home, in her own cosy room, with her beloved boy…. Yes, she could; to be sure, Fritz was not at home … but she could have him brought back…. No, she would not do it, she would not return at once … there was no occasion to do so — to-morrow morning would be quite time enough. She would say good-bye to Emil that very evening…. Yes, she would inform him at once that she was returning home early next morning, and that her only reason in coming had been to press his hand once more. Yes, that would be best.

Oh, he could, of course, accompany her to the hotel; and, goodness knows, he could even have supper with her in the garden restaurant … and she would go away as she had come…. Besides, she would see from his behaviour what he really felt towards her; she would be very reserved, even cold; it would be quite easy for her to act in that way, because she felt completely at her ease. It seemed to her as if all her desires had fallen into slumber again, and she had a feeling akin to a determination to remain respectable. As a young girl she had withstood temptation, she had been faithful to her husband; her whole widowhood had hitherto passed without attack…. Well, the long and the short of it was: if he wished to make her his wife she would be very glad, but she would reject any bolder proposal with the same austerity as … as … twelve years before, when he had showed her his window behind St. Paul's Church.

She stood up, stretched herself, held up her hands, and went to the window. The sky had become overcast, clouds were moving down from the mountains, but the storm had subsided.

She got ready to go out.

VII



BERTHA HAD HARDLY proceeded a few steps from the hotel when it began to rain. Under her open umbrella she seemed to herself to be protected against unwelcome attentions from people she might meet. A pleasant fragrance was diffused throughout the air, as if the rain brought with it the aroma of the neighbouring woods, shedding it over the town. Bertha gave herself up wholly to the pleasure of the walk; even the object of her outing appeared before her mind's eye only vaguely, as if seen through a mist. She had at last grown so weary as the result of the profusion of her changing feelings that she no longer felt anything at all. She was without fear, without hope, without purpose. She walked on past the gardens, across the Ring, and rejoiced in the humid fragrance of the elder-trees. In the forenoon it had completely escaped her notice that everything was beautiful in an array of violet blossoms. An idea brought a smile to her lips: she went into a flower shop and bought a little bunch of violets. As she raised the flowers to her lips, a great tenderness came over her; she thought of the train going homewards at seven o'clock, and she rejoiced, as if she had outwitted some one.

She walked slowly across the bridge, diagonally, and remembered how she had crossed it a few days ago in order to reach the neighbourhood of her former home, and to see Emil's window again. The throng of traffic at the bridge was immense; two streams, one coming from the suburb into the town, the other going in the opposite direction, poured by in confusion; carriages of all kinds rolled past; the air resounded with the jingling of bells, with whistling and with the shouts of drivers. Bertha tried to stand still, but was pushed forward.

Suddenly she heard a whistle quite close by. A carriage pulled up, a head leaned out of the window … it was Emil. He made a sign to her to come over to him. A few people immediately became attentive, and seemed very anxious to hear what the young man had to say to the lady who had gone up to his carriage.

"Will you get in?" Emil asked in a low voice.

"Get in…?"

"Why, yes, it is raining, you see!"

"Really, I would rather walk, if you don't mind."

"Just as you like," said Emil.

He got out quickly and paid the driver. Bertha observed, with some alarm, that about half a dozen people, who were crowding round her, were very anxious to see how this remarkable affair would turn out.

"Come," said Emil.

They quickly crossed the road, and thereby got away from the whole throng. They then walked slowly along a less frequented street by the bank of the Wien.

"Why, Emil, you haven't brought your umbrella with you!"

"Won't you take me under yours? Wait a moment, it won't do like this."

He took the umbrella out of her hand, held it over both of them, and thrust his arm under hers. Now she felt that it was *his* arm, and rejoiced greatly.

"The country, unfortunately, is out of the question," he said.

"What a pity."

"Well, what have you been doing with yourself all day long?"

She told him about the fashionable restaurant, in which she had had her dinner.

"Now, why on earth didn't I know about that? I thought you were dining with your cousin. We might, of

course, have had such a pleasant lunch together!"

"You have had so much to do, I dare say," she said, a little proud at being able to infuse a slight tone of sarcasm into her voice.

"Yes, that's true, in the afternoon, of course. I had to listen to half an opera."

"Oh? How was that, then?"

"There was a young composer with me — a very talented fellow, in his own way."

She was very glad to hear that. So that, then, was the way in which he spent his afternoons.

He stood still and, without letting go her arm, looked into her face.

"Do you know that you have really grown much prettier? Yes, I am quite serious about it! But, tell me, first of all, tell me candidly, how the idea came to you to write to me."

"Why, I have already told you."

"Have you thought of me, then, all this time?"

"A great deal."

"When you were married, too?"

"Certainly, I have always thought of you. And you?"

"Often, very often."

"But …"

"Well, what?"

"You are a man, you see!"

"Yes — but what do you mean by that?"

"I mean that certainly you must have loved many women."

"Loved … loved … yes, I suppose I have."

"But I," she broke out with animation, as though the truth was too strong to be restrained within her; "I have loved no one but you."

He took her hand and raised it to his lips.

"I think we might rather leave that undecided, though," he said.

"Look, I have brought some violets with me for you."

He smiled.

"Are they to prove that you have told me the truth? Anybody would think, from the way in which you said that, that you have done nothing else since we last met but pluck, or, at least, buy, violets for me. However, many thanks! But tell me, why didn't you want to get into the carriage?"

"Oh, but you know, a walk is so nice."

"But we can't walk forever…. We are having supper together, though?"

"Yes, I shall be delighted — for instance, here in an hotel," she added hastily.

At that time they were walking through quieter streets, and it was growing dusk.

Emil laughed.

"Oh, no, we will arrange things a little more cosily than that."

Bertha cast her eyes down.

"However, we mustn't sit at the same table as strangers," she said.

"Certainly not. We will even go somewhere where there is nobody else at all."

"What are you thinking of?" she asked. "I don't do that sort of thing!"

"Just as you please," he answered, shrugging his shoulders. "Have you an appetite yet?"

"No, not at all."

They were both silent for a time.

"Shall I not make the acquaintance of your boy some day?" he asked.

"Certainly," she replied, greatly pleased; "whenever you wish."

She began to tell him about Fritz, and then went on to speak about her family. Emil threw in a question at times, and soon he knew all that happened in the little town, even down to the efforts of Klingemann, of which Bertha gave him an account, laughingly, but with a certain satisfaction.

The street lamps were alight; the rays glittered on the damp pavements.

"My dear girl, we can't stroll about the streets all night, you know," said Emil suddenly.

"No … but I cannot come with you … into a restaurant…. Just think, if I should happen to meet my cousin or anyone else!"

"Make your mind easy, no one will see us."

Quickly he passed through a gateway and closed the umbrella.

"What are you going to do, then?"

She saw a large garden before her. Near the walls, from which canvas shelters were stretched, people were sitting at tables, laid for supper.

"There, do you mean?"

"No. Just come with me."

Immediately on the right of the gate was a small door, which had been left ajar.

"Come in here."

They found themselves in a narrow, lighted passage, on both sides of which were rows of doors. A waiter bowed and went in front of them, past all the doors. The last one he opened, allowed the guests to enter, and closed it again after them.

In the centre of the little room stood a small table laid for three; by the wall was a blue velvet sofa, and opposite that hung a gilt framed oval mirror, before which Bertha took her hat off and, as she did so, she noticed that the names "Irma" and "Rudi" had been scratched on the glass. At the same time, she saw in the mirror Emil coming up behind her. He placed his hands on her cheeks, bent her head back towards himself, and kissed her on the lips. Then he turned away without speaking, and rang the bell.

A very young waiter came in at once, as if he had been standing outside the door. When he had taken his order he left them, and Emil sat down. "Well, Bertha!"

She turned towards him. He took her gently by the hand and still continued to hold it in his, when Bertha had taken a seat beside him on the sofa. Mechanically she touched her hair with her other hand.

An older waiter came in, and Emil made his choice from the menu. Bertha agreed to everything. When the waiter had departed, Emil said:

"Mustn't the question be asked: How is it that all this hasn't happened before to-day?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why didn't you write to me long ago?"

"Well, I would … if you had got your Order sooner!"

He held her hand and kissed it.

"But you come to Vienna fairly often!"

"Oh, no."

He looked up.

"But you said something like that in your letter!"

She remembered then, and grew red.

"Well, yes … often … Monday was the last time I was here."

The waiter brought sardines and caviar, and left the room.

"Well," said Emil; "it is probably just the right time."

"In what way?"

"That we should have met again."

"Oh, I have often longed for you."

He seemed to be deep in thought.

"And perhaps it is also just as well that things *then* turned out as they did," he said. "It is on that very account that the recollection is so charming."

"Yes, charming."

They were both silent for a time.

"Do you remember …" she said, and then she began to talk of the old days, of their walks in the town-park, and of her first day at the Conservatoire.

He nodded in answer to everything she said, held his arm on the back of the sofa, and lightly touched the lock of hair, which curled over the nape of her neck. At times he threw in a word. Then Emil himself recalled something which she had forgotten; he had remembered a further outing: a trip to the Prater one Sunday morning.

"And do you still recollect," said Bertha, "how we …" she hesitated to utter it— "once were almost in love with each other?"

"Yes," he said. "And who knows …"

He was perhaps about to say: "It would have been better for me if I had married you" — but he did not finish the sentence.

He ordered champagne.

"It is not so long ago," said Bertha, "since I tasted champagne. The last time was about six months ago, at the party which my brother-in-law gave on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday."

She thought of the company at her brother-in-law's, and it was amazing how remote from the present time it all seemed — the entire little town and all who lived there.

The young waiter brought an ice-tub with the wine. At that moment it occurred to Bertha that Emil had certainly been there before, many a time, with other women. That, however, was a matter of tolerable indifference to her.

They clinked glasses and drank. Emil embraced Bertha and kissed her. That kiss reminded her of something … what could it have been, though?… Of the kisses she had received when a young girl?… Of the kiss of her husband?… No…. Then it suddenly occurred to her that it was exactly like the kisses which her young nephew Richard had lately given to her.

The waiter came in with fruit and pastry. Emil put some dates and a bunch of grapes on a plate for Bertha.

"Why don't you say something?" she asked. "Why do you leave me to do all the talking? And you know you could tell me so much!"

"I?…"

He slowly sipped the wine.

"Why, yes, about your tours."

"Good Heavens, one town is just like all the others. You must not, of course, lose sight of the fact that I only rarely travel for my own pleasure."

"Quite so, of course."

During the whole time she had not given a thought to the fact that it was Emil Lindbach, the celebrated violin virtuoso, with whom she was sitting there; and she felt bound to say:

"By the way, you are playing in Vienna soon. I should be very glad to hear you."

"Not a soul will hinder you from doing so," he replied drily.

It passed through her mind that it would really be very much nicer for her to hear him play, not at the concert, but for herself alone. She had almost said so, but then it occurred to her that that would have meant nothing else than: "I will come with you" — and, who could say, perhaps very soon she would go with him. It would be as easy for her as ever, if she had had some wine…. Yet, not so, the wine was affecting her differently from usual — it was not the soft inebriation which made her feel a little more cheerful; it was better, lovelier. It was not the few drops of wine that made it so; it was the touch of his dear hand, as he stroked her brow and hair. He had sat down beside her and he drew her head onto his shoulder. How gladly would she have fallen asleep like that…. Yes, indeed, nothing else did she desire…. Then she heard him whisper: "Darling."… She trembled softly.

Why was this the first time? Could she not have had all this before? Was there a grain of sense in living as she did?… After all, there was nothing wicked in what she was doing now…. And how sweet it was to feel the breath of a young man upon her eyelids!… No, not — not the breath of a young man… of a lover….

She had shut her eyes. She made not the slightest effort to open them again, she had not the least desire to know where she was, or with whom she was…. Who was it, after all?… Richard?… No…. Was she falling asleep, then?… She was there with Emil…. With whom?… But who was this Emil?… How hard it was to be clear as to who it was!… The breath upon her eyelids was the breath of the man she had loved when a girl … and, at the same time, that of the celebrated artist who was soon to give a concert … and, at the same time, of a man whom she had not seen for thousands and thousands of days … and, at the same time, of a gentleman with whom she was sitting alone in a restaurant, and who, at that moment, could do with her just as he pleased…. She felt his kiss upon her eyes…. How tender he was … and how handsome…. But what did he really look like, then?… She had only to open her eyes to be able to see him quite plainly…. But she preferred to imagine what he was like, without actually seeing him…. No, how funny — why, that was not in the least like his face!… Of course, it was the face of the young waiter, who had left the room a minute or two before…. But what did Emil look like, after all?… Like this?… No, no, of course, that was Richard's face…. But away … away…. Was she then so low as to think of nothing but other men while she … was with him?… If she could only open her eyes!… Ah!

She shook herself violently, so that she almost pushed Emil away — and then she tore her eyes wide open.

Emil gazed at her, smiling.

"Do you love me?" he asked.

She drew him towards her and kissed him of her own accord…. It was the first time that day that she had given him a kiss of her own accord, and in doing so she felt that she was not acting in accordance with her resolve of the morning…. She tried to think what that resolve had been…. To compromise herself in no way; to deny herself…. Yes, there had certainly been a time when that had been her wish, but why? She was in love with him, really and truly; and the moment had arrived which she had been awaiting for days…. No, for years!

Still their lips remained pressed together…. Ah, she longed to feel his arms about her … to be his, body and soul. She would not let him talk any more … he would have to take her unto himself…. He would have to realize that no other woman could love him so well as she did….

Emil rose to his feet and paced up and down the little room a few times.
Bertha raised her glass of champagne to her lips again.

"No more, Bertha," said Emil, in a low tone.

Yes, he was right, she thought. What was she really doing? Was she going to make herself drunk, then? Was there any need for that? After all, she was accountable to no one, she was free, she was young; she was determined to taste of happiness at last.

"Ought we not to be thinking of going?" said Emil.

Bertha nodded. He helped her to put on her jacket. She stood before the mirror and stuck the pin through her hat. They went. The young waiter was standing before the door; he bowed. A carriage was standing before the gate; Bertha got in; she did not hear what instructions Emil gave the driver. Emil took his seat by her side. Both were silent; they sat pressing closely against each other. The carriage rolled on, a long, long way. Wherever could it be, then, that Emil lived? But, perhaps, he had purposely told the driver to take a circuitous route, knowing, no doubt, how pleasant it was to drive together through the night like this.

The carriage pulled up. Emil got out.

"Give me your umbrella," he said.

She handed it out to him and he opened it. Then she got out and they both stood under the shelter of the umbrella, on which the rain was rattling down. Was this the street in which he lived? The door opened; they entered the hall; Emil took a candle which the porter handed to him. Before them was a fine broad staircase. When they reached the first floor Emil opened a door. They passed through an ante-chamber into a drawing-room. With the candle which he held in his hand Emil lighted two others upon the table; then he went up to Bertha, who was still standing in the doorway, as though waiting, and led her further into the room. He took the pin out of her hat, and placed the hat upon the table. In the uncertain light of the two feebly-burning candles, Bertha could only see that a few coloured pictures were hanging on the wall — portraits of the Emperor and Empress, so it appeared to her — that, on one side, was a broad divan covered with a Persian rug and that, near the window, there was an upright piano with a number of framed photographs on the lid. Over the piano a picture was hanging, but Bertha was unable to make it out. Yonder, she saw a pair of red curtains hanging down beside a door, which was standing half open and through the broad folds something white and gleaming could be seen within.

She could no longer restrain the question:

"Do you live here?"

"As you see."

She looked straight before her. On the table stood a couple of little glasses, a decanter containing liqueur and a small epergne, loaded with fruit and pastry.

"Is this your study?" asked Bertha.

Mechanically her eyes sought for a desk such as violin players use. Emil put his arm round her waist and led her to the piano. He sat down on the piano stool and drew her on to his knees.

"I may as well confess to you at once," he said to her, simply and almost drily, "that really I do not live here. It was only for our own sake … that I have … for a short while … I deemed it prudent … Vienna, you know, is a small town, and I didn't want to take you into my house at night-time."

She understood, but was not altogether satisfied. She looked up. She was now able to see the outlines of the picture which was hanging above the piano…. It was a naked female figure. Bertha had a curious desire to examine the picture, close at hand.

“What is that?” she asked.

“It is not a work of art,” said Emil.

He struck a match and held it up, so as to throw the light on the picture. Bertha saw that it was merely a wretched daub, but at the same time she felt that the painted woman, with the bold laughing eyes, was looking down at her, and she was glad when the match went out.

“You might just play something to me upon the piano,” said Emil.

She wondered at the coldness of his demeanour. Didn’t he realize that she was with him?… But, on the other hand, did she herself feel any special emotion?… No…. A strange sadness seemed to come welling forth from every corner of the room…. Why hadn’t he rather taken her to his own house?… What sort of a house was this, she wondered…. She regretted now that she had not drunk more wine…. She wished that she was not so sober….

“Well, won’t you play something to me?” said Emil. “Just think how long it is since I have heard you.”

She sat down and struck a chord.

“Indeed, I have forgotten everything.”

“Oh, do try!”

She played very softly Schumann’s Albumblatt, and she remembered how, a few days before, late in the evening, she had improvised as she was sitting at home, and Klingemann had walked up and down in front of the window. She could not help thinking also of the report that he had a scandalous picture in his room. And involuntarily, she glanced up again at the picture of the naked woman over the piano, but now the figure seemed to be gazing into space.

Emil had brought a chair beside Bertha’s. He drew her towards him and kissed her while her fingers first continued to play, and at length rested quietly upon the keys. Bertha heard the rain beating against the window-panes and a sensation as of being at home came over her.

Then she felt as though Emil was lifting her up and carrying her. Without letting her out of his arms he had stood up and was slowly bearing her out of the room. She felt her right arm graze against the curtain…. She kept her eyes closed; she could feel Emil’s cool breath upon her hair….

VIII



WHEN THEY WENT out into the street the rain had left off, but the air was permeated with a wondrous mildness and humidity. Most of the street lamps had already been extinguished; the one at the street corner was the nearest that was alight; and, as the sky was still overcast with clouds, deep darkness hung over the city. Emil had offered Bertha his arm; they walked in silence. From a church tower a clock struck — one. Bertha was surprised. She had believed that it must be nearly morning, but now she was glad at heart to wander mutely through the night in the still, soft air, leaning on his arm — because she loved him very much.

They entered an open square; before them lay the Church of St. Charles.

Emil hailed a driver who had fallen asleep, sitting on the footboard of his open carriage.

"It is such a fine night," said Emil; "we can still indulge in a short drive before I take you to your hotel — shall we?"

The carriage started off. Emil had taken off his hat; she laid it in her lap, an action which also afforded her pleasure. She took a sidelong glance at Emil; his eyes seemed to be looking into the distance.

"What are you thinking of?"

"I … To tell the truth, Bertha, I was thinking of a melody out of the opera, which that man I was telling you about played to me this afternoon. But I can't get it quite right."

"You are thinking of melodies now …" said Bertha, smiling, but with a slight-tone of reproach in her voice.

Again there was silence. The carriage drove slowly along the deserted
Ringstrasse, past the Opera House, the Museum and the public gardens.

"Emil?"

"What do you want, my darling?"

"When shall I at last have an opportunity of hearing you play again?"

"I am playing at a concert to-day, as a matter of fact," he said, as if it were a joke.

"No, Emil, that was not what I meant — I want you to play to me alone. You will do that just once … won't you? Please!"

"Yes, yes."

"It would mean so much to me. I should like you to know that there was no one in the room except myself listening to you."

"Quite so. But never mind that now, though."

He spoke in such a decided tone of voice that it seemed as if he was defending something from her. She could not understand for what reason her request could have been distasteful to him, and she continued:

"So then it is settled: to-morrow at five o'clock in the evening at your house?"

"Yes, I am curious to see whether you will like it there."

"Oh, of course I shall. Surely it will be much nicer being at your house than at that place where we have been this evening. And shall we spend the evening together? Do you know, I am just thinking whether I ought not to see my cousin…."

"But, my dearest one, please, don't let us map out a definite programme."

In saying this he put his arm round her neck, as if he wanted to make her feel the tenderness which was absent from the tone of his voice.

"Emil!"

"Well?"

"To-morrow we will play the Kreatzer Sonata together — the Andante at least."

"But, my dear child, we've talked enough about music; do let us drop the subject. I am quite prepared to believe that you are immensely interested in it."

Again he spoke in that vague way, from which she could not tell whether he really meant what he said or had spoken ironically. She did not, however, venture to ask. At the same time her yearning at that moment to hear him play the violin was so keen that it was almost painful.

"Ah, here we are near your hotel, I see!" exclaimed Emil; and, as if he had completely forgotten his wish to go for a drive with her before leaving her at her door, he called out the name of the hotel to the driver.

"Emil—"

"Well, dearest?"

"Do you still love me?"

Instead of answering he pressed her close to him and kissed her on the lips.

"Tell me, Emil—"

"Tell you what?"

"But I know you don't like anybody to ask much of you."

"Never mind, my child, ask anything you like."

"What will you…. Tell me, what are you accustomed to do with your forenoons?"

"Oh, I spend them in all sorts of ways. To-morrow, for instance, I am playing the violin solo in Haydn's Mass in the Lerchenfeld Church."

"Really? Then, of course, I won't have to wait any longer than to-morrow morning before I can hear you."

"If you want to. But it is really not worth the trouble…. That is to say, the Mass itself, of course, is very beautiful."

"However does it happen that you are going to play in the
Lerchenfeld Church?"

"It is … an act of kindness on my part."

"For whom?"

"For whom … well, for Haydn, of course."

A thrill of pain seemed to seize Bertha. At that moment she felt that there must be some special connexion between it and his taking part in the Mass at the Lerchenfeld Church. Perhaps some woman was singing in the Mass, who…. Ah, what did she know, after all?… But she would go to the church, yes, she must go … she could let no other woman have Emil! He belonged to her, to her alone … he had told her so, indeed…. And she would find a way to hold him fast… She had, she told herself, such infinite tenderness for him … she had reserved all her love for him alone…. She would completely envelop him in it … no more would he yearn for any other woman…. She would move to Vienna, be with him each day, be with him for ever.

"Emil—"

"Well, what is the matter with you, darling?"

He turned towards her and looked at her rather uneasily.

"Do you love me? Good Heavens, here we are already!"

"Really?" said Emil, with surprise.

"Yes — there, do you see? — that's where I am staying. So tell me, please,
Emil, tell me once more—"

"Yes, to-morrow at five o'clock, my darling. I am very glad."

"No, not that…. Tell me, do you—" The carriage stopped. Emil waited by Bertha's side until the porter came out and opened the door, then he kissed her hand with the most ceremonious politeness, and said:

"Good-bye till we meet again, dear lady."

He drove away.

Bertha's sleep that night was sound and heavy.

When she awoke, the light of the morning sun was streaming around her. She remembered the previous evening, and she was very glad that something which she had imagined to be so hard, and almost grievous, had been done and had proved to be quite easy and joyous. And then she felt a thrill of pride on recollecting her kisses, which had had nothing in them of the timidity of a first adventure. She could not observe the slightest trace of repentance in her heart, although it occurred to her that it was conventional to be penitent after such things as she had experienced. Words, too, like "sin" and "love affair" passed through her mind, without being able to linger in her thoughts, because they seemed to be devoid of all meaning. She believed herself certain that she replied to Emil's tenderness just like a woman accomplished in the art of love, and was very happy in the thought that all those things which came to other women as the result of the experiences of nights of drunkenness had come to her from the depth of her feelings. It seemed to her as though in the previous evening she had discovered in herself a gift, of the existence of which she had hitherto had no premonition, and she felt a slight emotion of regret stir within her at not having turned that gift to the best advantage earlier. She remembered one of Emil's questions as to her past, on account of which she had not been so shocked as she ought to have been, and now, as she recalled it to mind, the same smile appeared on her lips, as when she had sworn that she had told him the truth, which he had not wanted to believe. Then she thought of their next meeting; she pictured to herself how he would receive her and escort her through his rooms. The idea came to her that she would behave just as if nothing at all had yet happened between them. Not once would he be able to read in her glance the recollection of the previous evening; he would have to win her all over again, he would have to woo her — not with words alone, but also with his music…. Yes…. Wasn't she going to hear him play that very forenoon?… Of course — in the Church…. Then she remembered the sudden jealousy which had seized her the previous evening…. Yes, but why?… It seemed to her now to be so absurd — jealousy of a singer who perhaps was taking part in singing the Mass, or of some other unknown woman. She would, however, go to the Church in any case. Ah, how fine it would be to stand in the dim light of the Church, unseen by him and unable to see him, and to hear only his playing, which would float down to her from the choir. And she felt as though she rejoiced in the prospect of a new tenderness which should come to her from him without his apprehending it.

Slowly she got up and dressed herself. A gentle thought of her home rose up within her, but it was altogether without strength. She even found it a trouble to think of it. Moreover, she felt no penitence on that account; rather, she was proud of what she had done. She felt herself wholly as Emil's creature; all that had had part in her life previous to his advent seemed to be extinguished. If he were to demand of her that she should live a year, live the coming summer with him, but that then she should die — she would obey him.

Her dishevelled hair fell over her shoulders. Memories came to her which almost made her reel. … Ah, Heaven; why had all this come so late, so late? But there was still a long time before her — there were still five, still ten years during which she might remain beautiful…. Oh, there was even longer so far as he was concerned, if they remained together, since, indeed, he would change together with her. And again the hope flitted through her mind: if he should make her his wife, if they should live together, travel together, sleep together, night after night — but now she began to feel slightly ashamed of herself — why was it that these thoughts were for ever present in her mind? Yet, to live together, did it not mean something further — to have cares in common, to be able to talk with one another on all subjects? Yes, she would, before all things, be his friend. And that was what she would tell him in the evening before everything else. That day he would have at last to tell her everything, tell her about himself; he would have to unfold his whole life before her, from the moment when they had parted twelve years ago until — and she could not help being amazed as she pursued her thoughts — until the previous morning…. She had seen him again for the first time the morning before, and in the space of that one day she had become so completely his that she could no longer think of anything except him; she was scarcely any longer a mother … no, nothing but his beloved.

She went out into the brightness of the summer day. It occurred to her that she was meeting more people than usual, that most of the shops were shut — of course, it was Sunday! She had not thought of that at all. And now that, too, made her glad. Soon she met a very slender gentleman who was wearing his overcoat open and by whose side was walking a young girl with very dark, laughing eyes. Bertha could not help thinking that she and Emil looked just such another couple … and she pictured to herself how beautiful it must be to stroll about, not merely in the darkness of the night, but, just as these two were doing, openly in the broad light of day, arm in arm, and with happiness and laughter shining in their eyes. Many a time, when a gentleman going past her looked into her face, she felt as though she understood the language of glances, like something new to her. One man looked at her with a sort of grave expression, and he seemed to say: Well, you are also just like the others! Presently came two young people who left off talking to each other when they saw her. She felt as though they knew perfectly well what had happened the previous night. Then another man passed, who appeared to be in a great hurry, and he cast her a rapid sidelong glance which seemed to say: Why are you walking about here as imposingly, as if you were a good woman? Yesterday evening you were in the arms of one of us. Quite distinctly she heard within her that expression “one of us,” and, for the first time in her life, she could not help pondering over the fact that all the men who passed by were indeed men, and that all the women were indeed women; that they desired one another, and, if they so wished, found one another. And she had the feeling as though only on the previous day at that time she had been a woman apart, from whom all other women had secrets, whilst now she also was included amongst them and could talk to them. She tried to remember the period which followed her wedding, and she recalled to mind that she had felt nothing beyond a slight disappointment and shame. Very vague there rose in her mind a certain sentence — she could not tell whether she had once read it or heard it — namely: “It is always the same, indeed, after all.” And she seemed to herself much cleverer than the person, whoever it might have been, man or woman, who had spoken or written that sentence.

Presently she noticed that she was following the same route as she had taken on the previous morning. Her eye fell on an advertising column on which was an announcement of the concert in which Emil was one of those taking part. Delightedly she stopped before it. A gentleman stood beside her. She smiled and thought: if he knew that my eyes are resting upon the very name of the man who, last night, was my lover…. Suddenly, she felt very proud. What she had done she considered as something unique. She could scarcely imagine that other women possessed the same courage. She walked on through the public gardens in which there were

more people than on the previous day. Once again she saw children playing, governesses and nursemaids gossiping, reading, knitting. She noticed particularly a very old gentleman who had sat down on a seat in the sun; he looked at her, shook his head and followed her with a hard and inexorable glance. The incident created a most unpleasant impression upon her, and she had a feeling of injury in regard to the did gentleman. When, however, she mechanically glanced back, she observed that he was gazing at the sunlit sand and was still shaking his head. She realized then that this was due to his old age, and she asked herself whether Emil, too, would not one day be just such an aged gentleman, who would sit in the sun and shake his head. And all at once she saw herself walking along by his side in the chestnut avenue at home, but she was just as young as she was now, and he was being wheeled in an invalid's chair. She shivered slightly. If Herr Rupius were to know…. No — never, never would he believe that of her! If he had supposed her capable of such things he would not have called her to join him on the balcony and told her that his wife was intending to leave him….

At that moment she was amazed at what seemed to her to be the great exuberance of her life. She had the impression that she was existing in the midst of such complex relations as no other woman did. And this feeling also contributed to her pride.

As she walked past a group of children, of whom four were dressed exactly alike, she thought how strange it was that she had not for a moment considered the fact that her adventure of the previous day might possibly have consequences. But a connexion between that which had happened the day before between those wild embraces in a strange room — and a being which one day would call her "Mother" seemed to lie without the pale of all possibility.

She left the garden and took the road to the Lerchenfelderstrasse. She wondered whether Emil was now thinking that she was on her way to him. Whether his first thought that morning had been of her. And it seemed to her now that previously her imagination had pictured quite differently the morning after a night such as she had spent…. Yes, she had fancied it as a mutual awakening, breast on breast, and lips pressed to lips.

A detachment of soldiers came towards her. Officers paced along by the side of the pavement; one of them jostled her slightly, as he passed, and said politely:

"I beg your pardon."

He was a very handsome man, and he gave himself no further concern on her account, which vexed her a little. And the thought came to her involuntarily: had he also a beloved? And suddenly she knew for a certainty that he had been with the girl he loved the previous night; also that he loved her only, and concerned himself with other women as little as Emil did.

She was now in front of the church. The notes of the organ came surging forth into the street. A carriage was standing there, and a footman was on the box. How came that carriage there? All at once, it was quite clear to Bertha that some definite connexion must have subsisted between it and Emil, and she resolved to leave the church before the conclusion of the Mass so as to see who might enter the carriage. She went into the crowded church. She passed forward between the rows of seats until she reached the High Altar, by which the priest was standing. The notes of the organ died away, the string orchestra began to take up the melody. Bertha turned her head in the direction of the choir. Somehow, it seemed strange to her that Emil should, incognito, so to speak, be playing the solo in a Haydn Mass here in the Lerchenfelder Church…. She looked at the female figures in the front seats. She noticed two — three — four young women and several old ladies. Two were sitting in the foremost row; one of them was very fashionably dressed in black silk, the other appeared to be her maid. Bertha thought that in any case the carriage must belong to that aristocratic old lady, and the idea greatly tranquillized her mind. She walked back again, half unconsciously keeping everywhere

on the lookout for pretty women. There were still some who were passably good-looking; they all seemed to be absorbed in their devotions, and she felt ashamed that she alone was wandering about the church without any holy thoughts.

Then she noticed that the violin solo had already begun. He was now playing — he! he!… And at that moment she was hearing him play for the first time for more than ten years. And it seemed to her that it was the same sweet tone as of old, just as one recognized the voices of people whom one has not met for years. The soprano joined in. If she could only see the singer! It was a clear, fresh voice, though not very highly trained, and Bertha felt something like a personal connexion between the notes of the violin and the song. It was natural that Emil should know the girl who was now singing…. But was there not something more in the fact of their performing together in the Mass than appeared on the surface? The singing ceased, the notes of the violin continued to resound, and now they spoke to her alone, as though they wished to reassure her. The orchestra joined in, the violin solo hovered over the other instruments, and seemed only to have that one desire to come to an understanding with her. "I know that you are there," it seemed to say, "and I am playing only for you…."

The organ chimed in, but still the violin solo remained dominant over the rest. Bertha was so moved that tears rose to her eyes. At length the solo came to an end, as though engulfed in the swelling flood of sound from the other instruments, and it arose no more. Bertha scarcely listened, but she found a wonderful solace in the music sounding around her. Many a time she fancied that she could hear Emil's violin playing with the orchestra, and then it seemed quite strange, almost incredible, that she was standing there by a column, down in the body of the church and he was sitting at a desk up in the choir above, and the previous night they had been clasped in each other's arms, and all the hundreds of people there in the church knew nothing at all about it….

She must see him at once — she must! She wanted to wait for him at the bottom of the staircase…. She did not want to speak a word to him — no, but she wished to see him and also the others who came out — including the singer of whom she had been jealous. But she had got completely over that now; she knew that Emil could not deceive her….

The music had ceased; Bertha felt herself thrust forward towards the exit; she wanted to find the staircase, but it was at a considerable distance from her. Indeed, it was just as well that it was so … no, she would not have dared to do it, to put herself forward, to wait for him — what would he have thought of her? He certainly would not have liked it! No, she would disappear with the crowd, and would tell him in the evening that she had heard him play. She was now positively afraid of being observed by him. She stood at the entrance, walked down the steps, and went past the carriage, just as the old lady and her maid were getting into it. Bertha could not help smiling when she called to mind in what a state of apprehension the sight of that carriage had thrown her, and it seemed to her that her suspicion in regard to the carriage having been removed, all the others must necessarily flicker out! She felt as though she had passed through an extraordinary adventure and was standing now on the brink of an absolutely new existence. For the first time it seemed to her to have a meaning; everything else had been but a fiction of the imagination and became as nothing in comparison with the happiness which was streaming through her pulses, while she slowly sauntered from the church through the streets of the suburbs towards her hotel. It was not until she had nearly reached her destination that she noticed that she had gone the whole way as though lost in a dream and could scarcely remember which way she had taken and whether she had met any people or not.

As she was taking the key of her room the porter handed her a note and a bouquet of violets and lilac blossoms…. Oh, why had not she had a similar idea and sent Emil some flowers? But what could he have to

write to her about? With a slight thrill of fear at her heart, she opened the letter and read:

"DEAREST,

"I must thank you once again for that delightful evening. To-day, unfortunately, it is impossible for me to see you. Don't be angry with me, my dear Bertha, and don't forget to let me know in good time on the next occasion when you come to Vienna."

Ever your own,

"EMIL."

She went, she ran up the stairs, into her own room…. Why was he unable to see her that day? Why did he not at least tell her the reason? But then, after all, what did she know of his various obligations of an artistic and social nature?… It would certainly have been going too much into detail, and it would have appeared like an evasion if he had, at full length, given his reasons for putting her off. But in spite of that…. And then, why did he say: the next occasion when you came to Vienna?… Had she not told him that she would be remaining there a few days longer? He had forgotten that — he must have forgotten it! And immediately she sat down and wrote:

"MY DEAREST EMIL,

"I am very sorry indeed that you have had to put me off to-day, but luckily I am not leaving Vienna yet. Do please write to me at once, dearest, and tell me whether you can spare a little time for me to-morrow or the next day.

"A thousand kisses from your

"BERTHA."

"P.S. — It is most uncertain when I shall be coming to Vienna again, and I should be very sorry in any case to go away without seeing you once more."

She read the letter over. Then she added a further postscript:

"I must see you again!"

She hurried out into the street, handed the letter to a commissionaire, and impressed upon him strongly that he was on no account to come back without an answer. Then she went up to her room again and posted herself at the window. She wanted to keep herself from thinking, she wished only to look down into the street. She forced herself to fix her attention on the passers-by, and she recalled to mind a game, which she used to play as a child, and in which she and her brothers looked out of the window and amused themselves by commenting on how this or that passer-by resembled some one or other of their acquaintances. In the present circumstances, it was a matter of some difficulty for her to discover any such resemblances, for her room was situated on the third story; but, on the other hand, owing to the distance, it was easier for her to discover the arbitrary resemblances which she was looking for. First of all, came a woman who looked like her cousin Agatha; then some one who reminded her of her music teacher at the Conservatoire; he was arm in arm with a woman who looked like her sister-in-law's cook. Yonder was a young man who bore a resemblance to her brother, the actor. Directly behind him, and in the uniform of a captain, a person who was the image of her dead father came along the road; he stood still awhile before the hotel, glanced up, exactly as if he were

seeking her, and then disappeared through the doorway. For a moment Bertha was as greatly alarmed as if it really had been her father, who had come as a ghost from the grave. Then she forced herself to laugh — loudly — and sought to continue the game, but she was not able to play it any longer with success.

Her sole purpose now was to see whether the commissionaire was coming. At length she decided to have dinner, just to while away the time. After she had ordered it, she again went to the window. But now she no longer looked in the direction from which the commissionaire had to come, but her glances followed the crowded omnibuses and trams on their way to the suburbs. Then the captain, whom she had seen a short time before, struck her attention again, as he was just jumping on to a tram, a cigarette in his mouth. He no longer bore the slightest resemblance to her dead father.

She heard a clatter behind her; the waiter had come into the room. Bertha ate but little, and drank her wine very quickly. She grew sleepy, and leaned back in the corner of the divan. Her thoughts gradually grew indistinct; there was a ringing in her ears like the echoes of the organ which she had heard in the church. She shut her eyes and, all at once, as though evoked by magic, she saw the room in which she had been with Emil the previous evening, and behind the red curtains she perceived the gleaming whiteness of the coverlet. It appeared that she herself was sitting again before the piano, but another man was holding her in a close embrace — it was her nephew Richard. With an effort she tore her eyes open, she seemed to herself depraved beyond all measure, and she felt panic-stricken as though some atonement would have to be exacted from her, for these visionary fancies.

Once more she went to the window. She felt as if an eternity had passed since she had sent the commissionaire on his errand. She read through Emil's letter once again. Her glance lingered on the last words: "Ever your own"; and she repeated them to herself aloud and in a tender tone, and called to mind similar words which he had spoken the previous evening. She concocted a letter which was surely on the point of arriving and would certainly be couched in these terms: "My dearest Bertha! Heaven be thanked that you are going to remain in Vienna until to-morrow! I shall expect you for certain at my house at three o'clock," or: "to-morrow we will spend the whole day together," or even; "I have put off the appointment I had, so we can still see each other to-day. Come to me at once; longingly I am waiting for you!"

Well, whatever his answer might be, she would see him again before leaving Vienna, although not that day perhaps. Indeed, anything else was quite unthinkable. Why, then, was she a prey to this dreadful agitation, as though all were over between them? But why was his answer so long in coming?… He had, in any case, gone out to dinner — of course, he had no one to keep house for him! So the earliest that he could be home again was three o'clock…. But if he were not to return home till the evening?… She had, indeed, told the commissionaire to wait in any case — even till the night, if necessary…. But what was she to do? Of course, she could not stand there looking out of the window all the time! The hours, indeed, seemed endless! She was ready to weep with impatience, with despair!

She paced up and down the room; then she again stood at the window for a while, then she sat down and took up for a short time the novel which she had brought with her in her travelling bag; she attempted, too, to go to sleep — but did not succeed in doing so. At length four o'clock struck — nearly three hours had passed since she had begun her vigil.

There was a knock at the door. The commissionaire came into the room and handed her a letter. She tore open the envelope and with an involuntary movement, so as to conceal the expression on her features from the stranger, she turned towards the window.

She read the letter.

“MY DEAREST BERTHA,

“It is very good of you still to give me a choice between the next few days but, as indeed I have already hinted to you in my former letter, it is, unfortunately, absolutely impossible for me to do just as I like during that time. Believe me, I regret that it is so, at least as much as you do.

“Once more a thousand thanks and a thousand greetings and I trust that we will be able to arrange a delightful time when next we meet.

“Don’t forget me completely,

“Your

“EMIL.”

When she had finished reading the letter she was quite calm; she paid the commissionaire the fee he demanded and found that, for a person in her circumstances, it was by no means insignificant. Then she sat down at the table and tried to collect her thoughts. She realized immediately that she could no longer remain in Vienna, and her only regret was that there was no train which could take her home at once. On the table stood the half empty bottle of wine, bread crumbs were scattered beside the plate, on the bed lay her spring jacket, beside it were the flowers which he had sent her that very morning.

What could it all mean? Was it at an end?

Indistinctly, but so that it seemed that it must bear some relation to her recent experiences, there occurred to her a sentence which she had once read. It was about men who desire nothing more than “to attain their object…” But she had always considered that to be a phrase of the novelists. But, after all, it was surely not a letter of farewell that she was holding in her hand, was it?… Was it really not a letter of farewell? Might not these kind words be also lies?… Also lies — that was it!… For the first time the positive word forced itself into her thoughts…. Lies!… Then it was certain that, when he brought her home the previous night, he had already made up his mind not to see her again. And the appointment for the present day and his desire to see her again that day were lies….

She went over the events of the previous evening in her mind, and she asked herself what could she have said or done to put him out of humour or disappoint him…. Really, it had all been so beautiful, and Emil had seemed so happy, just as happy as she had been … was all that going to prove to have been a lie too?… How could she tell?… Perhaps, after all, she had put him out of humour without being aware that she was doing so…. She had, indeed, been nothing more or less than a good woman all her life…. Who could say whether she had not been guilty of something clumsy or stupid?… whether she had not been ludicrous and repellent in some moment when she had believed herself to be sacrificing, tender, enchanted and enchanting?… But what did she know of all these things?… And, all at once, she felt something almost in the nature of repentance that she had set out upon her adventure so utterly unprepared, that, until the previous day, she had been so chaste and good, that she had not had other lovers before Emil…. Then she remembered, too, that he had evaded her shy questions and requests on the subject of his violin playing, as if he had not wanted to admit her into that sphere of his life. He had thus remained strange to her, intentionally strange, so far as concerned the very things which were of the deepest and most vital importance to him. All at once she realized that she had no more in common with him than the pleasures of a night, and that the present morning had found them both as far apart from one another as they had been during all the years in which they had each led a separate existence.

And then jealousy again flared up within her…. But she felt as though she was always thus, as though

every conceivable emotion had always been present within her … love and distrust, and hope and penitence, and yearning and jealousy … and, for the first time in her life, she was so stirred, even to the very depths of her soul, that she understood those who in their despair have hurled themselves out of a window to meet their death…. And she perceived that the present state of affairs was impossible, that only certainty could be of any avail to her…. She must go to him and ask him … but she must ask in the manner of one who is holding a knife to another's breast….

She hurried away through the streets, which were almost deserted, as though all Vienna had gone off into the country…. But would she find him at home?… Would he not, perhaps, have had a presentiment that the idea might come to her to seek him, to take him to task, and would he not have taken steps to evade the chance of such an occurrence?… She was ashamed of having had to think of that, too…. And if he was at home would she find him alone?… And if he was not alone, would she be admitted into his house?

And if she found him in the arms of some other woman, what should she say?… Had he promised her anything? Had he sworn to be true to her? Had she even so much as demanded loyalty of him? How could she have imagined that he was waiting for her here in Vienna until she congratulated him on his Spanish Order?… Yes, could he not say to her: "You have thrown yourself on my neck and have desired nothing more than that I should take you as you are…." And if she asked herself — was he not right?… Had she not come to Vienna to be his beloved? — and for no other reason … without any regard to the past, without any guarantee as to the future?… Yes, that was all she had come for! All other hopes and wishes had only transiently hovered around her passion, and she did not deserve anything better than that which had happened to her…. And if she was candid to herself, she must also admit that of all that she had experienced this had still been the best….

She stopped at a street corner. All was quiet around her; the summer air about her was heavy and sultry. She retraced her steps back to her hotel. She was very tired, and a new thought rose up convulsively within her: was it not possible that he had written to put her off only because he also was tired?… She seemed to herself very experienced when that idea occurred to her…. And yet another thought flashed through her mind: that he could also love no other woman in the way in which he had loved her…. And suddenly she asked whether, after all, the previous night would remain her only experience — whether she herself would belong to no other man save him? And she rejoiced in the doubt, as if, by cherishing it, she was taking a kind of revenge on his compassionate glance and mocking lips.

And now she was back again in the cheerless room away up in the third storey of the hotel. The remains of her dinner had not yet been cleared away. Her jacket and the flowers were still lying on the bed. She took the flowers in her hand and raised them to her lips, as though about to kiss them. Suddenly, however, as though her whole anger burst forth again, she flung them violently to the ground. Then she threw herself on the bed, her face buried in her hands.

After lying for some time in this position she felt her calmness gradually returning. It was perhaps just as well that she could return home that very day. She thought of her boy, how he was accustomed to lie in his little cot with his whole face beaming with laughter, if his mother leaned over the railings. She yearned for him. Also she yearned in some slight degree for Elly and for Frau Rupius. Yes, it was true — Frau Rupius, of course, was going to leave her husband…. What could there be at the bottom of it all?… A love affair?… But, strangely enough, she was now still less able than before to picture to herself the answer to that question.

It was growing late, it was time for her to get ready for her departure…. So, then, she would be home again by Sunday evening.

She sat in the carriage; on her lap lay the flowers, which she had picked up from the floor…. Yes, she was

now travelling home, leaving the town where she … had experienced something — that was the right expression, wasn't it?… Words which she had read or heard in connexion with similar circumstances kept recurring continually to her mind … such words as: "bliss" … "transports of love" … "ecstasy" … and a gentle thrill of pride stirred within her at having experienced what those words denoted. And yet another thought came to her which caused her to grow singularly calm: if he also — maybe — had an affair with another woman at that very time … she had taken him from *her* … not for long indeed, but yet as completely as it was possible to take a man from a woman. She grew calmer and calmer, almost cheerful.

It was, indeed, clear to her that she, Bertha, the inexperienced woman, could not, with one assault, completely obtain possession of her beloved…. But might she not be successful on a second occasion, she wondered? She was very glad that she had not carried out her determination to hasten to him at once. Indeed, she even formed the intention of writing him such a cold letter that he would fall into a mild fit of anger; she would be coquettish, subtle…. But she must have him again … of that she was certain … soon, and, if possible, forever!… And so her dreams went on and on as the train carried her homewards…. Ever bolder they grew as the humming of the wheels grew deeper and deeper, lulling her into a semi-slumberous state.

On her arrival she found the little town buried in a deep sleep — she reached home and told the maidservant to fetch Fritz from her sister-in-law's the first thing in the morning. Then she slowly undressed herself. Her glance fell on the portrait of her dead husband, which hung over the bed. She asked herself whether it should remain in that position. Then the thought occurred to her that there are some women who come from their lovers and then are able to sleep by the side of their husbands, and she shuddered…. She could never have done such a thing while her husband had been alive!… And, if she *had* done it, she would never have returned home again….

IX

THE NEXT MORNING Bertha was wakened by Fritz. He had jumped on to her bed and had breathed softly on her eyelids. Bertha sat up, embraced and kissed him, and he immediately began to tell her how well he had fared with his uncle and aunt, how Elly had played with him, and how Richard had once had a fight with him without being able to beat him. On the previous day, too, he had learned to play the piano, and would soon be as clever at it as mamma.

Bertha was content just to listen to him.

"If only Emil could hear his sweet prattle now!" she thought.

She considered whether, on the next occasion, she should not take Fritz with her to Vienna to see Emil, by doing which she would at once remove anything of a suspicious nature in such a visit.

She thought only of the pleasant side of her experiences in Vienna, and of the letters which Emil had written to put her off scarcely anything remained in her memory, other than those words which had reference to a future meeting.

She got up in an almost cheerful frame of mind and, whilst she was dressing herself, she felt a quite new tenderness for her own body, which still seemed to her to be fragrant with the kisses of her beloved.

While the morning was yet young, she went to call on her relations. As she walked by the house of Herr Rupius she deliberated for a moment whether she should not go up and see him there and then. But she had a vague fear of being immediately involved again in the agitated atmosphere of the household, and she deferred the visit until the afternoon.

At her brother-in-law's house Elly was the first to meet her, and she welcomed her as boisterously as if Bertha had returned from a long journey. Her brother-in-law, who was on the point of going out, jestingly shook a threatening finger at Bertha and said:

"Well, have you had a good time?"

Bertha felt herself blushing crimson.

"Yes," he continued; "these are pretty stories that we hear about you!"

He did not, however, notice her embarrassment and, as he went out of the door, greeted her with a glance which plainly meant: "You can't keep your secrets from me."

"Father is always making jokes like that," said Elly. "I don't like him doing that at all!"

Bertha knew that her brother-in-law had only been talking at random, as his usual manner was, and that, if she had told him the truth, he would not have believed her for a moment.

Her sister-in-law came into the room, and Bertha had to relate all about her stay in Vienna.

To her own surprise she succeeded very well in cleverly blending truth with fiction. She told how she had been with her cousin to the public gardens and the picture gallery; on Sunday she had heard Mass at St. Stephen's Church; she had met in the street a teacher from the Conservatoire; and finally she even invented a funny married couple, whom she represented as having had supper one evening at her cousin's. The further she proceeded with her lies, the greater was her desire to tell all about Emil as well, and to inform them how she had met in the street the celebrated violinist Lindbach, who had formerly been with her at the Conservatoire, and how she had had a conversation with him. But a vague fear of not being able to stop at the right time caused her to refrain from making any reference to him.

Frau Albertine Garlan sat on the sofa in an attitude of profound lassitude, and nodded her head. Elly stood,

as usual, by the piano, her head resting on her hands, and she gazed open-eyed at her aunt.

From her sister-in-law's Bertha went on to the Mahlmanns' and gave the twins their music lesson. The finger exercises and scales which she had to hear were at first intolerable to her, but finally she ceased to listen to them at all, and let her thoughts wander at will. The cheerful mood of the morning had vanished, Vienna seemed to her to be infinitely distant, a strange feeling of disquietude came over her and suddenly the fear seized her that Emil might go away immediately after his concert. That would indeed be terrible! He might go away all of a sudden without her having seen him once more — and who could say when he would return?

She wondered whether it would not be well to arrange to be in Vienna in any case on the day of the concert. She had to admit to herself that she had not: the slightest longing to hear him play. Indeed, it seemed to her that she would not in the least mind if he was not a violin virtuoso at all, if he was not even an artist, but just an ordinary kind of man — a bookseller, or something like that! If she could only have him for herself, for herself alone!…

Meanwhile the twins played through their scales. It was surely a terrible doom to have to sit there and give these untalented brats music lessons. How was it that she had been in good spirits only just a little earlier that day?…

Ah, those beautiful days in Vienna! Quite irrespective of Emil — the entire freedom, the sauntering about the streets, the walks in the public gardens…. To be sure, she had spent more money during her stay than she could afford; two dozen lessons to the Mahlmann twins would not recoup her the outlay…. And now, here she had to come back again to her relations, to give music lessons, and really it might even be necessary to look about for fresh pupils, for her accounts would not balance at all that year!… Ah, what a life!…

In the street Bertha met Frau Martin, who asked her how she had enjoyed herself in Vienna. At the same time she threw Bertha a glance which clearly said:

"I'm quite sure you don't enjoy life so much as I do with my husband!"

Bertha had an overwhelming desire to shriek in that person's face:

"I have had a much better time than you think! I have been with an enchanting young man who is a thousand times more charming than your husband! And I understand how to enjoy life quite as well as you do! You have only a husband, but I have a lover! — a lover! — a lover!"…

Yet, of course, she said nothing of the kind, but related how she had gone with her cousin and the children for a walk in the public gardens.

Bertha also met with some other ladies with whom she was superficially acquainted. She felt that her mental attitude towards those ladies had undergone a complete change since her visit to Vienna — that she was freer, superior. It seemed to her that she was the only woman in the town with any experience, and she was almost sorry that nobody knew anything about it, for although, publicly, they would have despised her, in their hearts all those women would have been filled with unutterable envy of her.

And if, after all, they *had* known who…. Although in that hole of a town there were certainly many who had not so much as heard Emil's name! If only there was some one in the world to whom she could open her heart! Frau Rupius — yes, there was Frau Rupius!… But, of course, she was in the habit of going away, of taking trips!… And, to tell the truth, thought Bertha, that was also a matter of indifference to her. She would only like to know how things would eventually turn out so far as she and Emil were concerned, she would like to know how matters actually stood. It was the uncertainty that was causing her that terrible uneasiness…. Had she only had a love affair with him, after all?… Ah, but why had she not gone to him once again?… But, of course, that was quite impossible!… That letter…. He didn't want to see her, that was it!…

But then, on the other hand, he had sent her flowers….

And now she was back again with her relations. Richard was going to meet her and embrace her in his playful manner. She pushed him away.

"Impudent boy!" she thought to herself. "I know very well what he means by doing that, although he himself does not know. I understand these things — I have a lover in Vienna!…"

The music lesson took its course and, at the end of it, Elly and Richard played as a duet Beethoven's [Footnote: Query — Brahms (translator's note).] "Festival Overture" which was intended by them to be a birthday surprise for their father.

Bertha thought only of Emil. She was nearly being driven out of her mind by this wretched strumming … no, it was not possible to live on like that, whichever way she looked at it!… She was still a young woman, too…. Yes, that was the secret of it all, the real secret…. She would not be able to live on like that any more…. And yet it would not do for her … any other man…. How could she ever think of such a thing!… What a very wicked person she must be, after all! Who could tell whether it had not been that trait in her character which Emil, with his great experience of life, had perceived in her, and which had been the cause of his being unwilling to see her any more?… Ah, those women surely had the best of it who took everything easily, and, when abandoned by one man, immediately turned to another…. But stay, whatever could it be that was putting such thoughts as these into her head? Had Emil, then, abandoned her?… In three or four days she would be in Vienna again; with him; in his arms!… And had she been able to live for three years as she had done?… Three? — Six years — her whole life!… If he only knew that, if he only believed that!

Her sister-in-law came into the room and invited Bertha to have supper with them that evening…. Yes, that was her only distraction: to go out to dinner or supper occasionally at some other house than her own!

If only there was a man in the town to whom she could talk!… And Frau Rupius was going off on her travels and leaving her husband…. Hadn't a love affair, maybe, something to do with that, Bertha wondered.

The music lesson came to an end and Bertha took her leave. In the presence of her sister-in-law, too, she noticed that she had that feeling of superiority, almost of compassion, which had come over her when she had seen the other ladies. Yes, she was certain that she would not give up that one hour with Emil for a whole life such as her sister-in-law led. Moreover, as she thought to herself as she was walking homewards, she had not been able to arrive at a complete perception of her happiness, which, indeed, had all slipped by so quickly. And then that room, that whole house, that frightful picture…. No, no, it was all really hideous rather than anything else. After all, the only really beautiful moments had been those which had followed, when Emil had accompanied her to her hotel in the carriage, and her head had rested on his breast….

Ah, he loved her indeed; of course, not so deeply as she loved him; but how could that be possible? What a number of experiences he had had in his life! She thought of that now without any feeling of jealousy; rather, she felt a slight pity for him in having to carry so much in his memory. It was quite evident from his appearance that he was not a man who took life easily…. He was not of a cheerful disposition…. All the hours which she had spent with him seemed in her recollection as if encompassed by an incomprehensible melancholy. If she only knew all about him! He had told her so little about himself … nothing, indeed, absolutely nothing!… But how would that have been possible on the very first day that they had met again? Ah! if only he really knew her! If she were only not so shy, so incapable of expressing herself!

She would have to write to him again before seeing him…. Yes, she would write to him that very day. What a stupid concoction it was, that letter which she had sent him on the previous day! In truth, he could not have sent her any other answer than that which she had received. She would not write to him either defiantly or humbly…. No, after all, she was his beloved! She who, as she walked along the streets here in the little

town, was regarded by every one who met her as one of themselves … she was the beloved of that magnificent man whom she had worshipped since her girlhood. How unreservedly and unaffectedly she had given herself to him — not one of all the women she knew would have done that!… Ah, and she would do still more! Oh, yes! She would even live with him without being married to him, and she would be supremely indifferent to what people might say … she would even be proud of her action! And later on he would marry her, after all … of course he would. She was such a capable housekeeper, too…. And how much good it would be sure to do him, after the unsettled existence which he had been leading during the years of his wanderings, to live in a well-ordered house, with a good wife by his side, who had never loved any man but him.

And now she was home again. Before dinner was served she had made all her preparations for writing the letter. She ate her dinner with feverish impatience; she scarcely allowed herself time to cut up Fritz's dinner and give it to him. Then, instead of undressing him herself and putting him to bed for his afternoon sleep, as she was always accustomed to do, she told the maid to attend to him.

She sat down at the desk and the words flowed without effort from her pen, as though she had long ago composed in her head the whole letter.

"My EMIL, MY BELOVED, MY ALL!

"Since I have returned home again I have been possessed by an overwhelming desire to write to you, and I should like to say to you over and over again how happy, how infinitely happy, you have made me. I was angry with you at first when you wrote and said you could not see me on Sunday. I must confess that to you as well, for I feel that I am under the necessity of telling you everything that passes in my mind. Unfortunately, I could not do so while we were together; I had not the power of expressing myself, but now I can find the words and you must, I fear, put up with my boring you with this scribble. My dearest, my only one — yes, that you are, although it seems to me that you were not quite so certain of it as you ought to have been. I beseech you to believe that it is true. You see, I have no means, of course, wherewith to tell you this, other than these words, Emil, I have never, never loved any man, but you — and I will never love any other. Do with me as you will. I have no ties in the little town where I am living now — on the contrary, indeed, I often find it a terrible thing to be obliged to live my life here. I will move to Vienna, so as to be near you. Oh, do not fear that I will disturb you! I am not alone, you see, I have my boy, whom I *idolize*. I will cut down my expenses, and, in the long run, why shouldn't I succeed in finding pupils even in a large town like Vienna just as I do here, perhaps, indeed, even more easily than here, and in that way improve my position? Yet that is a secondary consideration, for I may tell you that it has long been my intention to move to Vienna if only for the sake of my dearly loved boy, when he grows older.

"You cannot imagine how stupid the men are here! And I can no longer bear to look at any one of them at all, since I have again had the happiness of being in your company.

"Write to me, my dearest! Yet you need not trouble to send me a whole long letter. In any case I shall be coming to Vienna again this week. I would have had to do so in any event, because of some pressing commissions, and you will then be able to tell me everything — just what you think of my proposal, and what you consider best for me to do. But you must promise me this, that, when I live in Vienna, you will often visit me. Of course, no one need know anything about it, if you do not care that they should. But you may believe me — every day on which I may be allowed to see you will be a red-letter day for me and that, in all the world, there is nobody who loves you in such a true and life-long manner as I do.

"Farewell, my beloved!

"Your

"BERTHA."

She did not venture to read over what she had written, but left the house at once so as to take the letter herself to the railway station. There she saw Frau Rupius, a few paces in front of her, accompanied by a maid who was carrying a small valise.

What could that mean?

She caught up Frau Rupius, just as the latter was going into the waiting room. The maid laid the valise on the large table in the centre of the room, kissed her mistress's hand, and departed.

"Frau Rupius!" exclaimed Bertha, a note of inquiry in her voice.

"I heard that you had returned already. Well, how did you get on?" said Frau Rupius, extending her hand in a friendly way.

"Very well — very well indeed, but—"

"Why, you are gazing at me as though you were quite frightened! No, Frau Bertha, I am coming back again — no later than to-morrow. The long journey that I had in view came to nothing, so I have had to — settle on something else."

"Something else?"

"Why, of course, staying at home. I shall be back again to-morrow. Well, how did you get on?"

"I told you just now — very well."

"Yes, of course, you did tell me before. But I see you are going to post that letter, are you not?"

And then for the first time Bertha noticed that she was still holding the letter to Emil in her hand. She gazed at it with such enraptured eyes that Frau Rupius smiled.

"Perhaps you would like me to take it with me? It is to go to Vienna,
I presume?"

"Yes," answered Bertha, and then she added resolutely, as though she was glad to be able to say it out at last: "to him."

Frau Ropius nodded her head, as if satisfied. But she neither looked at
Bertha nor made any reply.

"I am so glad that I have met you again!" said Bertha. "You are the only woman here, you know, whom I trust; indeed, you are the only woman who could understand anything like this."

"Ah, no," said Frau Rupius to herself, as though she were dreaming.

"I do envy you so, because to-day in a few short hours you will see
Vienna again. How fortunate you are!"

Frau Rupius had sat down in one of the leather armchairs by the table.
She rested her chin on her hand, looked at Bertha, and said:

"It seems to me, on the other hand, that it is you who are fortunate."

"No, I must, you see, remain here."

"Why?" asked Frau Rupius. "You are free, you know. But go and put that letter into the box at once, or I

shall see the address, and so learn more than you wish to tell me."

"I will, though not because of that — but I should be glad if the letter went by this train and not later."

Bertha hurried into the vestibule, posted the letter and at once returned to Anna, who was still sitting in the same quiet attitude.

"I might have told you everything, you know," Bertha went on to say; "indeed I might say that I wished to tell you before I actually went to Vienna … but — just fancy, isn't it strange? I did not venture to do so."

"Moreover at that time, too, there probably had not been anything to tell," said Frau Rupius, without looking at Bertha.

Bertha was amazed. How clever that woman was! She could see into everybody's thoughts!

"No, at that time there had not been anything to tell," she repeated, gazing at Frau Rupius with a kind of reverence. "Just think — you will probably find it hard to believe what I am going to tell you now, but I should feel a liar if I kept it secret."

"Well?"

Bertha had sat down on a seat beside Frau Rupius, and she spoke in a lower tone, for the vestibule door was standing open.

"I wanted to tell you this, Anna: that I do not in the least feel that I have done anything wicked, not even anything immoral."

"It wouldn't be a very clever thing, either, if you had."

"Yes, you are quite right…. What I really meant to say was rather that it seems to me as though I had done something quite good, as if I had done something outstanding. Yes, Frau Rupius, the fact of the matter is, I have been proud of myself ever since."

"Well, there is probably no reason for that either," said Frau Rupius, as if lost in thought, stroking Bertha's hand, which lay upon the table.

"I am aware of that, of course, and yet I am so proud and seem quite different from all the women whom I know. You see if you knew … if you were acquainted with him — it is such a strange affair! You mustn't think, let me tell you, that it is an acquaintanceship which I have made recently — quite the contrary; I have been in love with him, you must know, ever since I was quite a young girl, no less than twelve years ago. For a long time we had completely lost sight of one another, and now — isn't it wonderful? — now he is my … my … my … lover!"

She had said it at last. Her whole face was radiant.

Frau Rupius threw her a glance in which could be detected a little scorn and a great deal of kindliness.

"I am glad that you are happy," she said.

"How very kind you are indeed! But then, you see, on the other hand again, it is a dreadful thing that we are so far apart from one another; he, in Vienna; I, here — I don't think I shall ever be able to endure that. Moreover, I have ceased to feel that I belong to this place, least of all to my relations. If they knew … no, if they knew! However, they would never be able to bring themselves to believe it. A woman like my sister-in-law, for instance — well, I am perfectly certain that she could never imagine such a thing to be in any way possible."

"But you are really very ingenuous!" said Frau Rupius suddenly, almost with exasperation. Then she listened for a moment. "I thought I could hear the train whistling already."

She rose to her feet, walked over to the large glass door leading on to the platform, and looked out. A porter came and asked for the tickets in order to punch them.

"The train for Vienna is twenty minutes late," he remarked, at the same time.

Bertha had stood up and gone over to Frau Rupius.

"Why do you consider that I am ingenuous?" she asked shyly.

"But, indeed, you know absolutely nothing about men," replied Frau Rupius, as if she were annoyed. "You haven't, you know, the slightest idea among what kind of people you are living. I can assure you, you have no reason at all to be proud."

"I know, of course, that it is very stupid of me."

"Your sister-in-law — that is delightful! — your sister-in-law!"

"What do you mean, then?"

"I mean that she has had a lover too!"

"Whatever put such an idea as that into your head!"

"Well, she is not the only woman in this town."

"Yes, there are certainly women who … but, Albertine—"

"And do you know who it was? That is very amusing! It was Herr Klingemann!"

"No, that is impossible!"

"Of course, it is now a long time ago, about ten or eleven years."

"But at that time, by the way, you yourself had not come to live here, Frau Rupius!"

"Oh, I have heard it from the best source. It was Herr Klingemann himself who told me about it."

"Herr Klingemann himself! But is it possible for a man to be so base as all that!"

"I don't think there's the least doubt about that," answered Frau Rupius, sitting down on a seat near the door, whilst Bertha remained standing beside her, listening in amazement to her friend's words. "Yes, Herr Klingemann himself…. As soon as I came to the town, you must know, he did me the honour of making violent love to me, neck or nothing, so to speak. You know yourself, of course, what a loathsome wretch he is. I laughed him to scorn, which probably exasperated him a great deal, and evidently he thought that he would be able conclusively to prove to me how irresistible he was by recounting all his conquests."

"But perhaps he told you some things which were not true."

"A great deal, probably; but this story, as it happens, is true…. Ah, what a rabble these men are!"

There was a note of the deepest hatred in Frau Rupius' voice. Bertha was quite frightened. She had never thought it possible that Frau Rupius could have said such things.

"Yes, why shouldn't you know what kind of men they are amongst whom you are living?" continued Frau Rupius.

"No, I would never have thought it possible! If my brother-in-law knew about it!—"

"If he knew about it? He knows about it as well as you or I do!"

"What do you say! No, no!"

"Indeed, he caught them together — you understand me! Herr Klingemann and Albertine! So that, however much inclined he might have been to make the best of things, there was no doubt possible!"

"But, for Heaven's sake — what did he do, then?"

"Well, as you can see for yourself, he has not turned her out!"

"Well, yes, the children … of course!"

"The children — pooh-pooh! He forgave her for the sake of convenience — and chiefly because he could do as he liked after that. You can see for yourself how he treats her. When all is said and done, she is but little better than his servant; you know as well as I do in what a miserable, brow-beaten way she slinks about. He has brought it to this, that, ever since that moment, she has always had to look upon herself as a woman who has been treated with mercy. And I believe she has even a perpetual fear that he is reserving the punishment for some future day. But it is stupid of her to be afraid of that, for he wouldn't look out for another housekeeper for anything…. Ah, my dear Frau Bertha, we are not by any means angels, as you know now from your own experiences, but men are infamous so long" — she seemed to hesitate to complete the phrase — "so long as they are men."

Bertha was as though crushed; not so much on account of the things which Frau Rupius had told her as on account of the manner in which she had done so. She seemed to have become a quite different woman, and Bertha was pained at heart.

The door leading to the platform was opened and the low, incessant tinkling of the telegraph was heard. Frau Rupius stood up slowly, her features assumed a mild expression, and, stretching out her hand to Bertha, she said:

"Forgive me, I was only a little bit vexed. Things can be also very nice; of course, there are certainly decent men in the world as well as others. Oh, yes, things can be very nice, no doubt."

She looked out on to the railway lines and seemed to be following the iron track into the distance. Then she went on to say with that same soft, harmonious voice which appealed so strongly to Bertha:

"I shalt be home again to-morrow evening…. Oh, yes, of course, my travelling case!"

She hurried to the table and took her valise.

"It would have been a terrible catastrophe if I had forgotten that! I cannot travel without my ten bottles! Well, good-bye! And don't forget, though, that all I have been telling you happened ten years ago."

The train came into the station. Frau Rupius hurried to a compartment, got in, and, looking out of the window, nodded affably to Bertha. The latter endeavoured to respond as cheerfully, but she felt that her wave of the hand to the departing Frau Rupius was stiff and forced.

Slowly she walked homewards again. In vain she sought to persuade herself that all that she had heard was not the least concern of hers; the long past affair of her sister-in-law, the mean conduct of her brother-in-law, the baseness of Klingemann, the strange whims of that incomprehensible Frau Rupius; all had nothing to do with her. She could not explain it to herself, but somehow, it seemed to her as though all these things were mysteriously related to her own adventure.

Suddenly the gnawing doubts appeared again…. Why hadn't Emil wanted to see her again? Not on the following day, or on the second or on the third day? How was it? He had attained his object, that was sufficient for him…. However had she been able to write him that mad, shameless letter?

And a thrill of fear arose within her…. If he were to show her letter to another woman, maybe … make merry over it with her…. No, how on earth could such an idea come into her head? It was ridiculous even to think of such a thing!… It was possible, of course, that he would not answer the letter and would throw it into the wastepaper basket — but nothing worse than that…. No…. However, she must just have patience, and in two or three days all would be decided. She could not say anything with certainty, but she felt that this unendurable confusion within her mind could not last much longer. The question would have to be settled, somehow.

Late in the afternoon she again went for a walk amongst the vine-trellises with Fritz, but she did not go into the cemetery. Then she walked slowly down the hill and sauntered along under the chestnut trees. She

chatted with Fritz, asked him about all sorts of things, listened to his stories and, as her frequent custom was, instilled some knowledge into his head on several subjects. She tried to explain to him how far the sun is distant from the earth, how the rain comes from the clouds, and how the bunches of grapes grow, from which wine is made. She was not annoyed, as often happened, if the boy did not pay proper attention to her, because she realized well enough that she was only talking for the sake of distracting her own thoughts.

Then she walked down the hill, under the chestnut trees, and so back to the town. Presently she saw Herr Klingemann approaching, but the fact made not the slightest impression upon her. He spoke to her with forced politeness; all the time he held his straw hat in his hand and affected a great and almost gloomy gravity. He seemed very changed, and she observed, too, that his clothes in reality were not at all elegant, but positively shabby. Suddenly she could not help picturing him tenderly embracing her sister-in-law, and she felt extremely disgusted.

Later on she sat down on a bench and watched Fritz playing with some other children, all the time making an effort to keep her attention fixed on him so that she would not have to think of anything else.

In the evening she went to her relatives. She had a sensation as though she had had a presentiment of everything long before, for otherwise how could she have failed to have been struck before this by the kind of relations which existed between her brother-in-law and his wife? The former again made jocular remarks about Bertha's visit to Vienna. He asked when she was going there again, and whether they would not soon be hearing of her engagement. Bertha entered into the joke, and told how at least a dozen men had proposed to her, amongst others, a Government official; but she felt that her lips alone were speaking and smiling, while her soul remained serious and silent.

Richard sat beside her, and his knee touched hers, by chance. And as he was pouring out a glass of wine for her and she seized his hand to stop him, she felt a comforting glow steal up her arm as far as her shoulder. It made her feel happy. It seemed to her that she was being unfaithful to Emil. And that was quite as she wished; she wanted Emil to know that her senses were on the alert, that she was just the same as other women, and that she could accept the embraces of her nephew in just the same way as she did his…. Ah, yes, if he only knew it! That was what she ought to have written in her letter, not that humble, longing letter!…

But even while these thoughts were surging through her mind, she remained serious in the depths of her soul, and a feeling of solitude actually came over her, for she knew that no one could imagine what was taking place within her.

Afterwards, when she was walking homewards through the deserted streets, she met an officer whom she knew by sight. With him he had a pretty woman whom she had never seen before.

"Evidently a woman from Vienna!" she thought, for she knew that the officers often had such visitors.

She had a feeling of envy towards the woman; she wished that she was also being accompanied by a handsome young officer at that moment…. And why not?… After all, everybody was like that…. And now she herself had ceased to be a respectable woman. Emil, of course, did not believe that, any more than anybody else, and, anyhow, it was all just the same!

She reached home, undressed and went to bed. But the air was too sultry. She got up again, went to the window and opened it. Outside, all was dark. Perhaps somebody could see her standing there at the window, could see her skin gleaming through the darkness…. Indeed, she would not mind at all if anybody did see her like that!… Then she lay down on the bed again…. Ah, yes, she was no better than any of the others! And there was no good reason either why she should be….

Her thoughts grew indistinct…. Yes, he was the cause of it all, he had brought her to this, he had just taken her like a woman of the street — and then cast her off!… Ah, it was shameful, shameful! — how base men

were! And yet … it was delightful….

She fell asleep.

X

A WARM RAIN was gently falling the next morning. Thus Bertha was able to endure her immense impatience more easily than if the sun had been blazing down. She felt as though during her sleep much had been smoothed out within her. In the soft grey of the morning everything seemed so simple and so utterly commonplace. On the morrow she would receive the letter she was expecting, and the present day was just like a hundred others.

She gave her pupils their music lessons. She was very strict with her nephew that day and rapped him on the knuckles when he played unbearably badly. He was a lazy pupil — that was all.

In the afternoon she was struck by an idea, which seemed to herself to be extremely praiseworthy. She had for a long time past intended to teach Fritz how to read, and she would make a start that very day. For a whole hour she slaved away, instilling a few letters into his head.

The rain still kept falling; it was a pity that she could not go for a walk. The afternoon would be long, very long. Surely she ought to go and see Herr Rupius without further delay. It was too bad of her that she had not called on him since her return from Vienna. It was quite possible that he would feel somewhat ashamed of himself in her presence, because just lately he had been using such big words, and now Anna was still with him, after all….

Bertha left the house. In spite of the rain, she walked, first of all, out into the open country. It was long since she had been so tranquil as she was that day; she rejoiced in the day without agitation, without fear, and without expectation. Oh, if it could be always like that! She was astonished at the indifference with which she could think of Emil. She would be more than content if she should not hear another word from him, and could continue in her present state of tranquillity forever…. Yes, it was good and pleasant to be like that — to live in the little town, to give the few music lessons, which, after all, required no great effort, to educate her boy, to teach him to read, to write, and to count! Were her experiences of the last few days, she asked herself, worth so much anxiety — nay, so much humiliation? No, she was not intended for such things. It seemed as though the din of the great city, which had not disturbed her on her last visit, was now for the first time ringing in her ears, and she rejoiced in the beautiful calm which encompassed her in her present surroundings.

Thus the state of profound lassitude into which her soul had fallen after the unaccustomed agitations of the last few days appeared to Bertha as a state of tranquillity that would be final…. And yet, only a short time later, when she was wending her way back to the town, the internal quietude gradually disappeared, and vague forebodings of fresh agitations and sorrows awoke within her.

The sight of a young couple who passed her, pressed close to one another under an open umbrella, aroused in her a yearning for Emil. She did not resist it, for she already realized that everything within her was in such a state of upheaval that every breath brought some fresh and generally unexpected thing on to the surface of her soul.

It was growing dusk when Bertha entered Herr Rupius' room. He was sitting at the table, with a portfolio of pictures before him. The hanging lamp was lighted.

He looked up and returned her greeting.

"Let me see; you, of course, came back from Vienna on the evening of the day before yesterday," he said.

It sounded like a reproach, and Bertha had a sensation of guilt.

"Well, sit down," he continued; "and tell me what happened to you in Vienna."

“Nothing at all,” answered Bertha. “I went to the Museum, and I have seen the originals of several of your pictures.”

Herr Rupius made no reply.

“Your wife is coming back this very evening?”

“I believe not” — he was silent for a time, and then said, with intentional dryness: “I must ask your pardon for having told you recently things which I am sure could not possibly have been of any interest to you. For the rest, I do not think that my wife will return to-day.”

“But…. She told me so herself, you know.”

“Yes, she told me also. She simply wanted to spare me the farewell, or rather the comedy of farewell. By that I don’t mean anything at all untruthful, but just the things which usually accompany farewells: touching words, tears…. However, enough of that. Will you be good enough to come and see me at times? I shall be rather lonely, you know, when my wife is no longer with me.”

All this he said in a tone the sharpness of which was so little in keeping with the meaning of his words that Bertha sought in vain for a reply.

Rupius, however, continued at once:

“Well, and what else did you see besides the Museum?”

With great animation, Bertha began to tell all sorts of things about her visit to Vienna. She also mentioned that she had met an old friend of her schooldays, whom she had not seen for a long time. Strangely, too, the meeting had taken place exactly in front of the Falckenborg picture.

While she was speaking of Emil in this way without mentioning his name, her yearning for him increased until it seemed boundless, and she thought of writing to him again that day.

Then she noticed that Herr Rupius was keeping his gaze fixed intently on the door. His wife had come into the room. She went up to him, smiling.

“Here I am, back again!” she said, kissing him on the forehead; and then she held out her hand to Bertha.

“Good evening, Frau Rupius,” said Bertha, highly delighted.

Herr Rupius spoke not a word, but signs of violent agitation could be seen on his face. His wife, who had not yet taken off her hat, turned away for a moment, and then Bertha noticed how Herr Rupius had rested his face on both his hands, and had begun to sob inwardly.

Bertha left them. She was glad that Frau Rupius had returned; it seemed to be something in the nature of a good omen. By an early hour on the morrow she might receive the letter which would, perhaps, decide her fate. Her sense of restfulness had again completely vanished, but her being was filled with a different yearning from that which she had experienced before. She wished only to have Emil there, near her; she would have liked only to see him, to walk by his side.

In the evening, after she had put her little boy to bed, she stopped on for a long time alone in the dining-room; she went to the piano and played a few chords, then she walked over to the window and gazed out into the darkness. The rain had ceased, the earth was imbibing the moisture, the clouds were still hanging heavily over the landscape.

Bertha’s whole being became imbued with yearning; everything within her called to him; her eyes sought to see him before her in the darkness; her lips breathed a kiss into the air, as though it could reach his lips; and, unconsciously, as if her wishes had to soar aloft, away from all else that surrounded her, she looked up to Heaven and whispered:

“Give him back to me!…”

Never had she been as at that moment. She had an impression that for the first time she now really loved

him. Her love was free from all the elements which had previously disturbed it; there was no fear, no care, no doubt. Everything within her was the purest tenderness, and now, when a faint breeze came blowing and stirring the hair on her forehead, she felt as though it was a breath from the lips of Emil.

The next morning came, but no letter. Bertha was a little disappointed, but not disquieted. Soon Elly, who had suddenly acquired a great liking for playing with Fritz, made her appearance. The servant, on returning from the market, brought the news that the doctor had been summoned in the greatest haste to Herr Rupius' house, though she did not know whether it was Herr Rupius or his wife who was ill. Bertha decided to go and inquire herself without waiting until after dinner.

She gave the Mahlmaan twins their music lesson, feeling very absent-minded and nervous all the time, and then went to Herr Rupius' house. The servant told her that her mistress was ill in bed, but that it was nothing dangerous, although Doctor Friedrich had strictly forbidden that any visitors should be admitted. Bertha was frightened. She would have liked to speak to Herr Rupius, but did not wish to appear importunate.

In the afternoon she made an attempt at continuing Fritz's education, but, do what she could, she met with no success. Again, she had the impression that her own hopes were influenced by Anna having been taken ill; if Anna had been well, it would have surely happened also that the letter would have arrived by that time. She knew that such an idea was utter nonsense, but she could not resist it.

Soon after five o'clock she again set out to call on Herr Rupius. The maid admitted her. Herr Rupius himself wanted to speak to her. He was sitting in his easy-chair by the table.

"Well?" asked Bertha.

"The doctor is with her just at this moment — if you will wait a few minutes …"

Bertha did not venture to ask any questions, and both remained silent.
After a few seconds, Doctor Friedrich came out from the bedroom.

"Well, I cannot say anything definite yet," he said slowly; then, with a sudden resolution, he added: "Excuse me, Frau Garlan, but it is absolutely necessary for me to have a few words with Herr Rupius alone."

Herr Rupius winced.

"Then I won't disturb you," said Bertha mechanically, and she left them.

But she was so agitated that it was impossible for her to go home, and she walked along the pathway leading between the vine-trellises to the cemetery. She felt that something mysterious was happening in that house. The thought occurred to her that Anna might, perhaps, have made an attempt to commit suicide. If only she did not die, Bertha said to herself. And immediately the thought followed: if only a nice letter were to come from Emil!

She seemed to herself to be encompassed by nothing but dangers. She went into the cemetery. It was a beautiful, warm summer's day, and the flowers and blossoms were fragrant and fresh after the rain of the previous day. Bertha followed her accustomed path towards her husband's grave, but she felt that she had absolutely no object in going there. It was almost painful to her to read the words on the tombstone; they had no longer the least significance for her:

"Victor Mathias Garlan, died the 6th June, 1895."

It seemed to her, then, that any of her walks with Emil, which had happened ten years before, were nearer than the years she had spent by the side of her husband. Those years were as though they had not even existed … she would not have been able to believe in them if Fritz had not been alive…. Suddenly the idea passed through her mind that Fritz was not Garlan's son at all … perhaps he was really Emil's son…. Were not such

things possible, after all?… And she felt at that moment that she could understand the doctrine of the Holy Ghost…. Then she was alarmed at the madness of her own thoughts.

She looked at the broad roadway, stretching straight from the cemetery gate to the opposite wall, and all at once she knew, for a positive fact, that in a few days a coffin, with the corpse of Frau Rupius within it, would be borne along that road. She wanted to banish the idea, but the picture was there in full detail; the hearse was standing before the gate; the grave, which two men were digging yonder just at that moment, was destined for Frau Rupius; Herr Rupius was waiting by the open grave. He was sitting in his invalid chair, his plaid rug across his knees, and was staring at the coffin, which the black-garbed undertakers were slowly carrying along…. The vision was more than a mere presentiment; it was a precognition…. But whence had this idea come to her?

Then she heard people talking behind her. Two women walked past her — one was the widow of a lieutenant-colonel who had recently died, the other was her daughter. Both greeted Bertha and walked slowly on. Bertha thought that these two women would consider her a faithful widow who still grieved for her husband, and she seemed to herself to be an impostor, and she retired hastily.

Possibly there would be some news awaiting her at home, a telegram from Emil, perhaps — though that, indeed, would be nothing extraordinary … after all, the two things were closely connected…. She wondered whether Frau Rupius still thought of what Bertha had told her at the railway station, and whether, perhaps, she would speak of it in her delirium … however, that was a matter of indifference, indeed. The only matters of importance were that Emil should write and that Frau Rupius should get better…. She would have to call again and see Herr Rupius; he would be sure to tell her what the doctor had had to say…. And Bertha hastened homewards between the vine-trellises down the hill….

Nothing had arrived, no letter, no telegram…. Fritz had gone out with the maid. Ah, how lonely she was. She hurried to Herr Rupius' house once more, and the maid opened the door to her. Things were progressing very badly, Herr Rupius was unable to see anyone….

"But what is the matter with her? Don't you know what the doctor said?"

"An inflammation, so the doctor said."

"What kind of an inflammation?"

"Or it might even be blood poisoning, he said. A nurse from the hospital will be here immediately."

Bertha went away. On the square in front of the restaurant a few people were sitting, and one table, right in front, was occupied by some officers, as was usual at that time of the day.

They didn't know what was going on up yonder, thought Bertha, otherwise they wouldn't be sitting there and laughing…. Blood poisoning — well, what could that mean?… Obviously Frau Rupius had attempted to commit suicide!… But why?… Because she was unable to go away — or did not wish to? — but she wouldn't die — no, she must not die!

Bertha called on her relatives, so as to pass the time. Only her sister-in-law was at home; she already knew that Frau Rupius had been taken ill, but that did not affect her very much, and she soon began to talk of other things. Bertha could not endure it, and took her departure.

In the evening she tried to tell Fritz stories, then she read the paper, in which, amongst other things, she found another announcement of the concert at which Emil was to play. It struck her as very strange that the concert was still an event which was announced to take place, and not one long since over.

She was unable to go to bed without making one more inquiry at Herr Rupius' house. She met the nurse in the anteroom. It was the one Doctor

Friedrich always sent to his private patients. She had a cheerful-looking face, and a comforting expression in her eyes.

"The doctor will be sure to pull Frau Rupius through," she said.

And, although Bertha knew that the nurse was always making such observations, she felt more reassured.

She walked home, went to bed, and fell quietly asleep.

XI

THE NEXT MORNING Bertha was late in waking up. She was fresh after her good night's rest. A letter was lying beside the bed. And then, for the first time that morning, everything came back to her mind; Frau Rupius was very ill, and here was a letter from Emil. She seized it so hurriedly that she set the little candlestick shaking violently; she opened the envelope and read the letter.

"MY DEAR BERTHA,

"Many thanks for your nice letter. I was very pleased to get it. But I must tell you that your idea of coming to live permanently in Vienna requires again to be carefully considered by you. Circumstances here are quite different from what you seem to imagine. Even the native, fully accredited musicians have the greatest difficulty in obtaining pupils at anything like decent fees, and for you it would be — at the beginning, at least — almost a matter of impossibility. Where you are now you have your assured income, your circle of relations and friends, your home; and, finally, it is the place where you lived with your husband, where your child was born, and so it is the place where you ought to be.

"And, apart from all these considerations, it would be a very foolish procedure on your part to plunge into the exhausting struggle for a livelihood in the city. I purposely refrain from saying anything about the part which your affection for me (you know I return it with all my heart) seems to play in your proposals; to bring that in would carry the whole question over to another domain, and we must not let that happen. I will accept no sacrifice from you, under any condition. I need not assure you that I would like to see you again, and soon, too, for there is nothing I desire so much as to spend another such an hour with you as that which you recently gave me (and for which I am very grateful to you).

"So, then, arrange matters, my child, in such a way that, say, every four or six weeks you can come to Vienna for a day and a night. We will often be very happy again, I trust. I regret I cannot see you during the next few days, and, moreover, I start off on a tour immediately after the concert. I have to play in London during the season there, and after that I am going on to Scotland. So I look forward to the joyful prospect of meeting you again in the autumn.

"I greet you and kiss that sweet spot behind your ear, which I love best of all.

"Your

"EMIL."

When Bertha had read the letter to the end, for some little time she sat bolt upright in the bed. A shudder seemed to pass through her whole body. She was not surprised; she knew that she had expected no other kind of letter. She shook herself….

Every four or six weeks … excellent! Yes, for a day and a night…. It was shameful, shameful!… And how afraid he was that she might go to Vienna…. And then that observation right at the end, as if his object had been, while he was still at a safe distance, so to speak, to stimulate her senses, because that, forsooth, was the only kind of relations he desired to keep up with her…. It was shameful, shameful!… What sort of a woman had she been! She felt a loathing — loathing!…

She sprang out of bed and dressed herself…. Well, what was going to happen after that?… It was over, over, over! He had not time to spare for her — no time at all!… One night every, six weeks, after the

autumn…. Yes, my dear sir, I at once accept your honourable proposals with pleasure. Indeed, for myself, I desire nothing better! I will go on turning sour; I will go on giving music lessons and growing imbecile in this hole of a town…. You will fiddle away, turn women's heads, travel, be rich, famous and happy — and every four or six weeks I may hope to be taken for one night to some shabby room where you entertain your women of the street…. It was shameful, shameful, shameful!…

Quick! She would get ready to go to Frau Rupius — Anna was ill, seriously ill — what mattered anything else?

Before she went out, Bertha pressed Fritz to her heart, and she recalled the passage in Emil's letter: it is the place where your child was born…. Indeed, that was quite right, too; but Emil had not said that because it was true, but only to avoid the danger of having to see her more than once in six weeks.

She hurried off…. How was it, then, that she did not feel any nervousness on Frau Rupius' account?… Ah, of course, she had known that Frau Rupius had been better the previous evening. But where was the letter, though?… She had again thrust it quite mechanically into her bodice.

Some officers were sitting in front of the restaurant having breakfast. They were all covered with dust, having just returned from the manoeuvres. One of them gazed after Bertha. He was a very young man, and could only have obtained his commission quite recently….

Pray, don't be afraid, thought Bertha. I am altogether at your disposal. I have an engagement which takes me into Vienna only once every four or six weeks … please, tell me when you would like …

The balcony door was open, the red velvet piano cover was hanging over the balustrade. Well, evidently order had been restored again — otherwise, would the cover have been hanging over the balustrade?… Of course not, so forward then, and upstairs without fear….

The maid opened the door. There was no need for Bertha to ask her any questions; in her wide-open eyes there was an expression of terrified amazement, such as is only called forth by the proximity of an appalling death.

Bertha went in. She entered the drawing-room first; the door leading to the bedroom was open to its full extent. The bed was standing in the middle of the room, away from the wall, and free on all sides. At the foot was sitting the nurse, looking very tired, with her head sunk upon her breast, Herr Rupius was sitting in his invalid's chair by the head of the bed. The room was so dark that it was not until Bertha had come quite close that she could see Anna's face clearly. Frau Rupius seemed to be asleep. Bertha came nearer. She could hear the patient's breathing; it was regular, but inconceivably rapid — she had never heard a human being breathe like that before. Then Bertha felt that the eyes of the two others were fixed upon her. Her surprise at having been admitted in this unceremonious manner lasted only for a moment, since she understood that all precautionary measures had now become superfluous; the matter had been decided.

Suddenly another pair of eyes turned towards Bertha. Frau Rupius opened her eyes, and was watching her friend attentively. The nurse made room for Bertha, and went into the adjoining room. Bertha sat down, moving her chair closer to the bed. She noticed that Anna was slowly stretching out her hand towards her. She grasped it.

"Dear Frau Rupius," she said, "you are already getting on much better now, are you not?"

She felt that she was again saying something awkward, but she knew she could not help doing so. It was just her fate to say such things in the presence of Frau Rupius, even in her last hour.

Anna smiled; she looked as pale and young as a girl.

"Thank you, dear Bertha," she said.

"But whatever for, my dear, dear Anna?"

She had the greatest difficulty in restraining her tears. At the same time, however, she was very curious to hear what had actually happened.

A long interval of silence ensued. Anna closed her eyes again and appeared to sleep. Herr Rupius sat motionless in his chair. Bertha looked sometimes at Anna and sometimes at him.

In any case, she must wait, she thought. She wondered what Emil would say if *she* were suddenly to die. Ah, surely it would cause him some slight grief if he had to think that she whom he had held in his arms a few days before now lay mouldering in the grave. He might even weep. Yes, he would weep if she were to die … wretched egoist though he was at other times….

Ah, but where were her thoughts flying to again? Wasn't she still holding her friend's hand in her own? Oh, if she could only save her!… Who was now in the worse plight — this woman who was doomed to die, or Bertha herself — who had been so ignominiously deceived? Was it necessary, though, to put it so strongly as that, because of one night?… Ah, but that had much too fine a sound!… for the sake of one hour — to humiliate her so — to ruin her so — was not that unscrupulous and shameless?… How she hated him! How she hated him!… If only he were to break down at the next concert, so that all the people would laugh him to scorn, and he would be put to shame, and all the papers would have the news— "The career of Herr Emil Lindbach is absolutely ended." And all his women would say: "Ah, I don't like that a bit, a fiddler who breaks down!"…

Yes, then he would probably remember her, the only woman who had loved him since the days of her girlhood, who loved him truly … and whom he was now treating so basely!… Then he would be sure to come back to her and beg her to forgive him — and she would say to him: "Do you see, Emil; do you see, Emil?"… for, naturally, anything more intelligent than that would not occur to her….

And there she was thinking again of him, always of him — and here somebody was dying, and she was sitting by the bed, and that silent person there was the husband…. It was all so quiet; only from the street, as though wafted up over the balcony and through the open door, came a confused murmur — men's voices, the rumble of the traffic, the jingle of a cyclist's bell, the clattering of a sabre on the pavement, and, now and then, the twitter of the birds — but it all seemed so far away, so utterly unconnected with actuality.

Anna became restless and tossed her head to and fro — several times, quickly, quicker and quicker….

"Now it's beginning!" said a soft voice behind Bertha.

She turned round. It was the nurse with the cheerful features; but Bertha now perceived that that expression did not denote cheerfulness at all, but was only the result of a strained effort never to allow sorrow to be noticeable, and she considered the face to be indescribably fearful…. What was it the nurse had said?… "Now it's beginning."… Yes, like a concert or a play … and Bertha remembered that once the same words had been spoken beside her own bed, at the time when she began to feel the pangs of childbirth….

Suddenly Anna opened her eyes, opened them very wide, so that they appeared immense; she fixed them on her husband, and, vainly striving, meanwhile, to raise herself up, said in a quite clear voice:

"It was only you, only you … believe me, it was only you whom I have…"

The last word was unintelligible, but Bertha guessed it.

Then Herr Rupius bent down, and kissed the dying woman on the forehead.
Anna threw her arms around him; his lips lingered long on her eyes.

The nurse had gone out of the room again. Suddenly Anna pushed her husband away from her; she no longer recognized him; delirium had set in.

Bertha rose to her feet in great alarm, but she remained standing by the bed.

"Go now!" said Herr Rupius to her.

She lingered.

"Go!" he repeated, this time in a stern voice.

Bertha realized that she must go. She left the room quietly on tip-toes, as though Anna might still be disturbed by the sound of footsteps. Just as she entered the adjoining room she saw Doctor Friedrich, who was taking off his overcoat and, at the same time, was talking to a young doctor, the assistant at the hospital.

He did not notice Bertha, and she heard him say:

"In any other case I would have notified the authorities, but, as this affair falls out as it does…. Besides, there would be a terrible scandal, and poor Rupius would be the worst sufferer—" then he saw Bertha—"Good day, Frau Garlan."

"Oh, doctor, what is really the matter, then?"

Doctor Friedrich threw his colleague a rapid glance.

"Blood poisoning," he replied. "You are, of course, aware, my dear Frau Garlan, that people often cut their fingers and die as a result; the wound cannot always he located. It is a great misfortune…. Yes, indeed!"

He went into the room, followed by the assistant.

Bertha went into the street like one stupified. What could be the meaning of the words which she had overheard— "information?"— "scandal?" Yes, had Herr Rupius, perhaps, murdered his own wife?… No, what nonsense! But some injury had been done to her, it was quite obvious … and it must have been, in some way, connected with the visit to Vienna; for she had been taken ill during the night subsequent to her journey…. And the words of the dying woman recurred to Bertha: "It was only you, only you whom I have loved!…" Had they not sounded like a prayer for forgiveness? "Loved only you" — but … another … of course, she had a lover in Vienna…. Well, yes, but what followed?… Yes, she had wished to go away, and had not done so after all…. What could it have been that she said on that occasion at the railway station?… "I have made up my mind to do something else."… Yes, of course, she had taken leave of her lover in Vienna, and, on her return — had poisoned herself?… But why should she do that, though, if she loved only her husband?… And that was not a lie, certainly not!

Bertha could not understand….

Why ever had she gone away, then?… What should she do now, too?… She could not rest. She could neither go home nor to her relatives, she must go back again…. She wondered, too, whether Anna would have to die if another letter from Emil came that day?… In truth, she was losing her reason…. Of course, these two things had not the least connection between them … and yet … why was she unable to dissociate them one from the other?…

Once more she hurried up the steps. Not a quarter of an hour had elapsed since she had left the house. The hall door was open, the nurse was in the anteroom.

"It is all over," she said.

Bertha went on. Herr Rupius was sitting by the table, all alone; the door leading to the death-chamber was closed. He made Bertha come quite close to him, then he seized the hand which she stretched out to him.

"Why, why did she do it?" he said. "Why did she do *that*?"

Bertha was silent.

"It wasn't necessary," continued Herr Rupius, "Heaven knows, it wasn't necessary. What difference could the other men make to me — tell me that?"

Bertha nodded.

"The main point is to live — yes, that is it! Why did she do that?"

It sounded like a suppressed wail, although he seemed to be speaking very quietly. Bertha burst into tears.

"No, it wasn't necessary! I would have brought it up — brought it up as my own child!"

Bertha looked up sharply. All at once she understood everything, and a terrible fear ran through her whole being. She thought of herself. If in that night she also … in that one hour?… So great was her terror that she believed that she must be losing her reason. What had hitherto been scarcely more than a vague possibility floating through her mind now loomed suddenly before her, an indisputable certainty. It could not possibly be otherwise, the death of Anna was an omen, the pointing of the finger of God.

At the same time there arose within her mind the recollection of the day, twelve years ago, when she had been walking with Emil on the bank of the Wien, and he had kissed her and for the first time she had felt an ardent yearning for a child. How was it that she had not experienced the same yearning when, recently, she felt his arms about her?… Yes, she knew now; she had desired nothing more than the pleasures of the moment; she had been no better than a woman of the streets. It would be only the just punishment of Heaven if she also perished in her shame, like the poor woman lying in the next room.

"I would like to see her once more," she said.

Rupius pointed towards the door. Bertha opened it, went up slowly to the bed on which lay the body of the dead woman, gazed upon her friend for a long time, and kissed her on both eyes. Then a sense of unequalled restfulness stole over her. She would have liked to have remained beside the corpse for hours together, for, in proximity to it, her own sorrow and disappointment became as nothing to her. She knelt down by the bed and clasped her hands, but she did not pray.

All at once everything danced before her eyes. Suddenly a well-known attack of weakness came over her, a dizziness which passed off immediately. At first she trembled slightly, but then she drew a deep breath, as one who has been rescued, because, indeed, with the approach of that lassitude, she felt at the same time that, at that moment, not only her previous apprehensions, but all the illusion of that confused day, the last tremors of the desires of womanhood, everything which she had considered to be love, had begun to merge and to fade away into nothingness. And kneeling by the death-bed, she realized that she was not one of those women who are gifted with a cheerful temperament and can quaff the joys of life without trepidation. She thought with disgust of that hour of pleasure that had been granted her, and, in comparison with the purity of that yearning kiss, the recollection of which had beautified her whole existence, the shameless joys which she then had tasted seemed to her like an immense falsehood.

The relations which had existed between the paralysed man in the room beyond and this woman, who had had to die for her deceit, seemed now to be spread out before her with wonderful clearness. And, while she gazed upon the pallid brow of the dead woman she could not help thinking of the unknown man, on account of whom Anna had had to die, and who, exempt from punishment, and, perhaps, remorseless, too, dared to go about in a great town and to live on, like any other — no, like thousands and thousands of others who had stared at her with covetous, indecent glances. Bertha divined what an enormous wrong had been wrought against the world in that the longing for pleasure is placed in woman just as in man: and that with women that longing is a sin, demanding expiation, if the yearning for pleasure is not at the same time a yearning for motherhood.

She rose, threw a last farewell glance at her dearly loved friend, and left the death-chamber.

Herr Rupius was sitting in the adjoining room, exactly as she had left him. She was seized with a profound desire to speak some words of consolation to him. For a moment it seemed to her as though her own destiny had only had this one purpose: to enable her fully to understand the misery of that man. She would have liked

to have been able to tell him so, but she felt that he was one of those who desire to be alone with their sorrow. And so, without speaking, she sat down opposite to him.

Beatrice (1913)

Original German Title: 'Frau Beate und ihr Sohn'

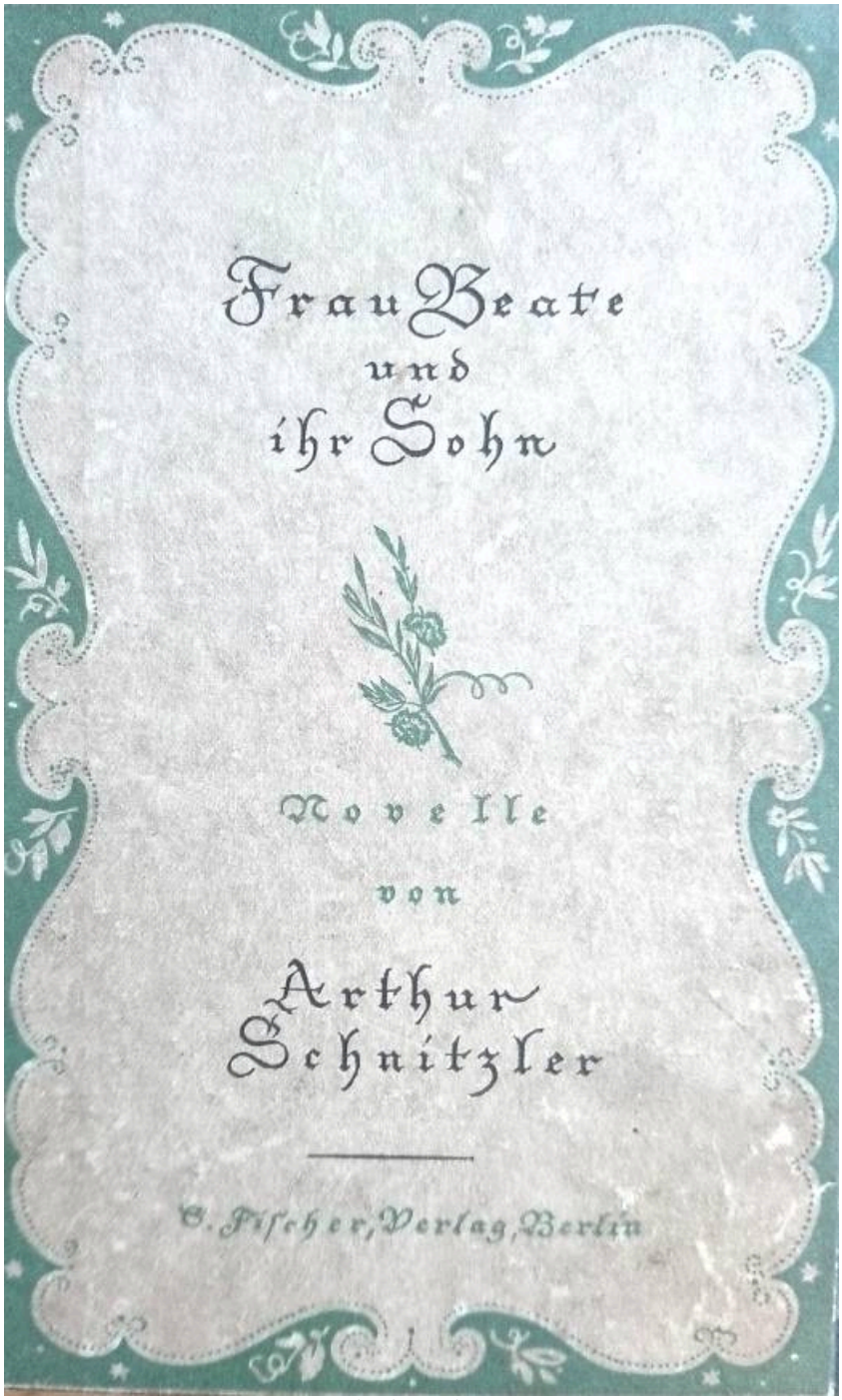
Translated by Agnes Jacques, 1926

The second instalment of the 'Woman' trilogy, *Frau Beate und ihr Sohn* first appeared in the literary journal *Die neue Rundschau* in Berlin between February and April 1913. In the same year, the publisher S. Fischer released it as a book. It tells the story of the widow Beate Heinold, who after five years of sexual abstinence, gives in to the advances of a young admirer, but is unable to resolve the conflicts arising from her own expectations and societal norms.

Beate (Beatrice in the translation) is the widow of the celebrated actor Ferdinand Heinold and lives with her son Hugo in a villa on a lake in the Salzkammergut region. To prevent her son from being permanently disappointed by an unhappy love affair, Beate visits Baroness Fortunata, a neighbour whom she suspects of having an erotic interest in him. She tells the Baroness to her face that she is against Hugo becoming her lover. The Baroness feigns ignorance, but promises Beate she will not encourage her son. Beate recalls a similar conversation she had with her husband's then-mistress, who was hoping to win him over and marry him.

Beate is desired by the married bank director Welponer, as well as a young doctor and an older lawyer. She enjoys their attentions, even though she rejects their advances, some subtle, some direct. Young Fritz, a school friend of Hugo's, arrives and is warmly invited by the Heinolds to stay at the villa. Fritz, too, desires Beate. During Hugo's night-time absence, Fritz, after Beate's initial resistance, ends up in her "desiring arms." Although she intends to end the affair quickly, she visibly blossoms. From Fritz, she learns that not only Hugo is apparently having a fling with the Baroness, but that her deceased husband is also rumored to have had an affair with the bank director's wife. She also has to admit to herself that she has been unfaithful to her husband, not physically, but in her mind. Alone, she wavers between erotic fantasies, thoughts of escape and death fantasies.

Some critics have identified a theme of incest in the novel, interpreting Beate's own son as the true object of her erotic interest, which casts the opening conversation between her and the Baroness in a new light, namely under the motive of jealousy. As in the first novel of the trilogy, *Frau Berta Garlan* (1900), there is the recurring theme of the power of sexuality, experienced by the protagonists and the resulting conflicts of norms that the women have to work through. Both narratives are also connected by the meticulous development of psychological conflict that often features prominently in many of the author's works. The implied story of incest, which originates with the mother, outraged Catholic readers at the time and made Schnitzler a controversial figure to many of his readers.



The first edition

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Schnitzler, close to the time of publication

PREFACE



Beatrice, written in 1913, but presented now in English for the first time, is the second of Schnitzler's woman trilogy, which includes *Bertha Garlan* (1900) and *Fräulein Else* (1925). The heroines of these novels spring from a common root — good Austrian upper middle-class, where situations such as they must face are entirely unprecedented. Intellectually these three women are strikingly similar — they are able to view their anguish with detachment, impersonally and without illusion.

In one particular Beatrice differs from her sisters. While they are partly the victims of circumstance, yet they have voluntarily chosen their careers. But Beatrice is driven on to her destruction, powerless to stem the tide which she sees engulfing her. Mother-love, so strong in her, only enhances her despair, but does not help her meet the onslaught of desire. The utter realization of her plight, coupled with a complete paralysis of will, is the root of Beatrice's tragedy. In *Beatrice* Schnitzler is a fatalist — here sex is an external force — relentless, uncontrollable, and overwhelming.

In his woman trilogy, the author is a different Schnitzler from the one to whom we have become accustomed through *Anatol* and *Reigen* and *Liebelei.* His prose is just as gracious, his wit as ironic, his portraiture of men and women, as cruelly frank. But to these qualities he has added a veil of sadness, a tenderness, an uncanny penetration into the finest shadings of feminine thought and emotion that will make these novels stand out long after the hard brilliance of *Reigen* will cease to dazzle the mind.

I should like to make acknowledgment to Miss Edna Staudinger for her invaluable assistance in the proof-reading and final revision of this book.

A. J.

PART ONE



SHE THOUGHT SHE heard a sound in the next room. She left her half-finished letter, went softly towards the partly open door and peered into the darkened room, where her son lay fast asleep on the divan. As she stepped inside, she could see how Hugo's breast rose and fell regularly in the healthy sleep of youth. His soft, rather crumpled collar lay open at his throat; he was fully clothed, even to the heavy spiked boots which he always wore in the country. Obviously he had intended to lie down for just a short time during the heat of midday, and then to resume his studies, for his books and papers lay open around him. Now he threw his head from side to side as if trying to awaken, but he only stirred a little and slept on. The mother's eyes, by this time accustomed to the darkness, could no longer ignore the fact that the strange, painfully intent expression around the boy's lips that she had noticed again and again during the past days, did not leave him even in sleep. Beatrice sighed and shook her head. Then she went back to her room, shutting the door quietly behind her. She looked at the letter, but had no desire to go on with it. Dr Teichmann, for whom it was intended, was certainly not the man with whom she could speak unreservedly — in fact, she already regretted the all too friendly smile with which she had bidden him farewell from the train. For just now, during these summer weeks in the country, the memory of her husband, who had died five years before, was more than ever alive within her, and she laid aside all thoughts of the lawyer's wooing and the proposal of marriage — which he had not yet made, but which was bound to come — together with all similar thoughts concerning her own future. She felt she could speak of her concern for Hugo least of all with the man who would see in it not so much a proof of confidence as a definite sign of encouragement. Therefore she destroyed the letter and went irresolutely to the window.

The line of mountains across the lake dissolved in tremulous rings of air. Below, in the water, sparkled the reflection of the sun, broken into a thousand rays. Beatrice turned away her eyes, blinded by the light, after casting a fleeting glance over the narrow meadow land, the dust-exhaling country road, the blinking roofs of the villas, and the motionless field of young corn in her garden. Her glance rested on the white bench under her window — and she recalled the many times when her husband had sat there dreaming over some rôle, or dozing, especially when the air was so redolent of summer as it was to-day. She remembered how she would lean over the sill to stroke the grey-black curly hair and run her fingers tenderly through it, till Ferdinand, who though immediately awake, but feigning sleep so that he might not interrupt her caresses, would slowly turn around and look up at her with his bright child's eyes, which could look so heroic or heavy with death on those long ago, but never to be forgotten, magic evenings. She loved to think of those times, though she knew she should not, certainly not with those sighs which in spite of herself came from her lips. For Ferdinand himself — in the days that were past, he had made her swear to it — wanted his memory to be celebrated only by pleasant recollections, and by an untroubled acceptance of new happiness. And Beatrice thought: "How dreadful it is to think that we could speak of such horror in such bright times, jokingly and lightly, as if it concerned only others and could never fall upon us. And then when it really comes, we do not grasp it — and yet we endure it — and time passes, and we live on, and we sleep in the same bed that we shared once with our beloved, drink out of the same glass that he touched with his lips, pick strawberries in the shade of the same pine where we picked them with one who will never pick them again — and still we never quite understand either the meaning of death or life." She had often sat on this bench at Ferdinand's side, while the child, followed by the loving glances of his parents, had romped in the garden with ball or hoop. But as well

as she knew in her mind that that Hugo who lay asleep there on the divan, with the new painful expression around his mouth, was the same child that played in the garden but a few years ago, in her heart she could not comprehend it any more than that Ferdinand was dead — more truly dead than Hamlet or Cyrano or King Richard in whose masks she had so often seen him die. But that she would probably never quite grasp, for between the bright full present and the dark mystery of death, there had not even elapsed weeks or days of suffering. Healthy and happy, Ferdinand had left the house one day to attend a theatrical performance, and within an hour they had brought him back from the railroad station, where the stroke had felled him.

While Beatrice clung to these memories, in her heart she felt all the time some other ghostly tormenting thing which awaited her solution. It was only after much meditation, that she knew that the last sentence in her unfinished letter, in which she had wanted to mention Hugo, would not leave her in peace, and that she must think it through to the end. It was clear to her that something either had happened or was about to happen to Hugo, something she had long awaited, but still had not considered possible. In earlier years, when he was still a child, she had dearly cherished the thought that later she would be not only mother, but friend and confidante to her boy — and till just recently, when he would come to her with his tales of school mishaps or to confess his first boyish love affairs, she dared imagine that her wish might be gratified. Had he not let her read those touching childish verses which he had written to little Elise Weber, the sister of a school friend of his, and which Elise herself had never seen? And even last winter, had he not told his mother that a little girl, whose name he gallantly kept secret, had kissed him on the cheek during a dance? And last spring, had he not come to her much disturbed to tell her of two boys in his class who had spent an evening at the Prater in questionable company, and who had boasted of coming home at three in the morning? And so Beatrice had dared hope that Hugo would choose her as confidante in his more serious emotional experiences, and that she would be able by encouragement and advice to keep him from the many sorrows and dangers of youth. But now she saw that these had been the dreams of an over-indulgent mother's heart, for at the first real conflict of the soul, Hugo showed himself strange and taciturn and his mother remained shy and helpless before these new events.

She shuddered, for at the first breath of wind, like a sneering confirmation of the fear in her heart, she saw down in the valley the hated white banner fluttering from the roof of the bright villa on the lake shore. Rippling jauntily, it waved the importunate restless greeting of a depraved woman to the boy whom she wanted to ruin. In spite of herself, Beatrice raised a menacing hand, then hurried back into the room in eager haste to see her son and have it out with him at once. She listened at the connecting door for a moment, for she did not want to awaken him from his good sleep, and she thought she heard his regular boyish breathing as before. Carefully she opened the door, intending to await Hugo's awakening, and then, sitting beside him on the divan, with motherly tact to win his secret from him. But, to her astonishment, she discovered that Hugo was no longer there. He had gone out without saying even adieu to his mother, as he had always done before, and without the accustomed farewell kiss — evidently he, too, feared the question which for days had been visible on her lips and which, as she knew now for the first time, she had expected to put to him at that moment. Was he already so far from her, already torn away by restless desire? That was what the first hand-clasp of that woman had made of him, when he met her recently on the wharf. That was what her look had done to him yesterday, when she smilingly greeted him from the gallery of the swimming pool, as his glowing boyish body had come swimming up out of the waves. Of course — he was more than seventeen, and she had never imagined that he would be spared for one certain girl who was destined for him from the beginning of time, and who would meet him as young and pure as he himself was. But only this had she wished for him: that his youth should not fall a victim to the lust of such a woman, who owed her half-

forgotten stage reputation only to a glittering wantonness, and whose life and calling had not been changed even by her late marriage.

Beatrice sat on Hugo's divan in the half-darkened room, her eyes closed, her head in her hands, deliberating. Where might Hugo be? With the Baroness perhaps? That was unbelievable. These things could not develop so rapidly. But was there still any possibility of saving her beloved boy from this miserable affair? She was afraid not. For indeed she had forebodings: just as Hugo had the features of his father, so did his father's blood run through his veins, that dark blood of those men from a different world, a lawless world, where boys were inflamed with the dark passions of men, while their eyes even in maturity gleamed with childish dreams. Was it only the father's blood? Did hers run more coolly? Dared she say that, simply because since the death of her husband no temptation had come to her? And because she had never belonged to another, was what she had once told her husband therefore any less true: that he alone had filled her whole life for her, because when his features were veiled by night, he represented many different characters to her — because in his arms she was the beloved of King Richard and Cyrano and Hamlet and all the others whose rôles he played — the beloved of heroes and scoundrels, the blessed and the damned, the naive and the sophisticated. In fact, in her early girlhood had she not wished to be the wife of the actor because union with him offered the only possibility for her to live the decorous life which her bourgeois upbringing had intended her for, and at the same time to lead the wild adventurous existence for which she longed in her secret dreams? And she remembered how she had taken Ferdinand not only against the wishes of her parents, whose pious bourgeois minds could not quite overcome a slight repugnance at the thought of the actor, even after her marriage had been consummated, but how she had won him besides from a much more dangerous enemy. For at the time when she met Ferdinand, he was in the midst of a liaison (which was no secret in the town) with a not very young but wealthy widow, who had assisted him greatly in his early days and who had often paid his debts. It was only lack of will power that kept him bound to her. It was then that Beatrice had made the romantic decision to free her hero from such unworthy bondage and to dissolve the ties of a relationship which, owing to its unstable foundation, was bound to break sooner or later, but which she feared might come too late for the good of the artist and his art. It was a never-to-be-forgotten occasion for her, and although she received a half insulting and joking refusal which she never forgot, and though it was a whole year till Ferdinand was really finally freed, still she could not doubt that that conversation was the first step towards the break. In fact her husband did the story full justice and boasted of it proudly even to people who were not in the least concerned.

Beatrice removed her hands from her eyes, and stood up in sudden passion. Almost twenty years lay between that madly bold adventure and the present — but had she become a different creature since then? Did she not dare to trust herself to steer the course of one who was so dear to her, as she saw fit? Was she the woman to stand humbly by, while her son's young life was being besmirched and broken, instead of acting as she had formerly acted with the other? She would go to-day to the Baroness, who after all was only a woman and must have somewhere, though it be in the nethermost corner of her soul, some understanding of the meaning of motherhood. And happy in her sudden decision, which came to her like a beam of light, she went to the window, opened the blinds, and, full of new hope, she greeted as a good omen the charming landscape before her eyes. And she felt that she must carry out her sudden decision immediately, while her determination was fresh and strong. Without further hesitation, she went into her bedroom and rang for her maid, whom she bade be especially careful in helping her dress that day. As soon as this was done to her satisfaction, she put on her broad-brimmed panama hat with its narrow black band, over her dark-blonde, thickly waved hair, chose the freshest of three red roses from a vase on her night table, slipped it into her

white leather belt, took her slender mountain cane in her hand, and left the house. She felt young, happy, and sure of the outcome of her mission.

As she stepped out of the door, she saw Herr and Frau Arbesbacher at the garden gate. He was in a waterproof shooting jacket and leather breeches; she wore a dark flowered cotton gown which, in style and cut, was too matronly for her rather careworn but still youngish face.

"Greetings, Frau Heinold," called out the architect, raising his green Tyrolean hat with its cockade of goat's hair, and holding it in his hand so that his white head remained uncovered for a moment. "We have just come to call for you." And to her inquiring look: "Have you forgotten that to-day is Thursday, the day of the tarock party at the Director's?"

"Yes, that is so," said Beatrice, remembering.

"We just met your son," remarked Frau Arbesbacher, and over her faded features passed a tired smile.

"He went up that way, with two thick books under his arm," finished the architect, pointing to the path which led over the sunny meadow, upwards toward the wood. "An industrious boy!"

Beatrice smiled in unrestrained happiness. "Next year he will finish the 'gymnasium,'" she said.

"How pretty Frau Heinold looks to-day," remarked Frau Arbesbacher naively, in a voice that was almost humble with surprise.

"Yes, how are we going to feel, Frau Beatelinde, when we suddenly find we have a grown son who fights duels and turns the heads of the women?"

"But did you fight duels?" interrupted his wife.

"Oh, well, I've had my little battles. Those things come of themselves. You get into trouble either way."

They walked along the road, which with its splendid view of the lake, led up past the town to the villa of Herr Welponer, Bank Director.

"Well — here I seem to be going along with you, when instead I should go down to the village first — to the post-office — in regard to a package which was sent from Vienna a week ago, and has not yet arrived. And it was sent special delivery too," she added naturally, as if she believed the story which she had so suddenly invented, she knew not why.

"Perhaps it will come on this train — your package," said Frau Arbesbacher, pointing down below where the little train came puffing pompously from behind the cliffs, up to the station, which was slightly elevated from the meadow land. Travellers put their heads out of the windows, and Herr Arbesbacher waved his hat.

"What are you doing?" asked his wife.

"There are surely friends of ours among them, and one must be polite,"

"Well, then, auf Wiedersehen," said Beatrice suddenly. "I'll come up directly, of course. Take them my greetings in the meantime."

She departed quickly and went down the road she had just ascended. She felt that the architect and his wife, who had remained standing on the road, followed her with their eyes almost to the villa which Arbesbacher had built for his friend and hunting companion, Ferdinand Heinold.

Here Beatrice took the narrow wagon road which led steeply past unassuming country houses to the town, but she had to wait before crossing the tracks, for the train was just leaving the station. Now she realized that she really had nothing to do at the post-office, but had much more important work — to speak with the Baroness. But now that she knew her son was in the woods with his books, that did not seem so pressing as it had seemed an hour earlier. She crossed the tracks to the station and found the usual excitement which follows the arrival of a train. The two omnibuses from the Lake Hotel and the Posthof were just rumbling away with their passengers. Other arrivals, high-voiced and excited, followed by porters, and happy-go-lucky

picnickers, crossed Beatrice's path. She watched in amusement a whole family, father, mother, three children, nurse, and maid, trying to get into one cab, together with trunks, satchels, bags, umbrellas, and canes, and a snapping little fox-terrier. From another cab, a young married couple — friends of the year before — waved to her with the irresistible good spirits of summer resorters. A young man in a light grey summer suit, a very new yellow leather bag in his hand, raised his straw hat to Beatrice. She did not recognize him and greeted him coolly.

"How do you do, Frau Heinold," said the stranger, shifting his bag from one hand to the other and awkwardly offering Beatrice his free right one.

"Why, Fritzl!" cried Beatrice, suddenly recognizing him.

"Certainly, Frau Heinold, it's I — Fritzl himself!"

"Do you know — I really did not know you. You've become quite a dandy."

"Well, that's not so bad, is it?" answered Fritz, changing his bag back again to the other hand. "But didn't Hugo receive my card?"

"I don't know, but he told me recently that he was expecting you."

"Naturally, it was arranged in Vienna that I should come here for a few days from Ischl. But yesterday I wrote expressly that I expected to arrive this afternoon."

"In any case, he will be very happy. Where are you staying, Herr Weber?"

"No, no, please, Frau Heinold — don't say Herr Weber."

"Well then, where — Herr — Fritz?"

"I sent my trunk on in advance to the Posthof, but as soon as I have seen to my affairs, I shall be free to make my headquarters at the Villa Beatrice."

"Villa Beatrice? There is no villa by that name here."

"But what else can it be called when a person with such a charming name lives in it?"

"It has no name — I don't like such things — No. 7 Oak Road is its name — see — there it is — up there — with the green balcony—"

Fritz Weber looked thoughtfully in the direction designated. "The view must be delightful — But I shall not stop longer now. In an hour I shall find Hugo at home, I hope?"

"I believe so. Just now he is in the woods studying."

"Studying, is he? Well, we shall have to cure him of that habit as soon as possible."

"Oho!"

"You see, I want to take trips with him. Do you know that I climbed the Dachstein recently?"

"Unfortunately not, Herr Weber. It was really not in the newspapers."

"But, please — not Herr Weber."

"I'm afraid it will have to be that, since I'm neither your aunt nor governess."

"An aunt like you might not be a bad thing to have."

"Dear me, what a gallant gentleman he is — and at his age too." She laughed aloud; and instead of the well-dressed young man, the boy suddenly stood before her, the child whom she had known since he was twelve; and his little blonde moustache looked as if it were pasted to his lip. "Well, then, auf Wiedersehen, Fritzl," she said, holding out her hand. "This evening at supper you'll tell us about your Dachstein party, won't you?"

Fritz bowed a trifle stiffly, then kissed Beatrice's hand, which she allowed as if in submission to the quick passing of time. Then he went away with heightened self-respect, which was evident from his carriage and walk. "And he," thought Beatrice, "he is the friend of my Hugo. Of course he is a bit older — about a year

and a half or two, at least. He was always in a higher class than Hugo at school," Beatrice remembered, "and he had to repeat one year." In any case, she was glad that he was there and expected to go on excursions with Hugo — if she could only send the two boys immediately on a two weeks' walking tour! Ten hours' walking a day, with the mountain wind blowing through one's hair — evenings to fall exhausted on a straw pallet, and in the morning to start again with the sun! How excellent and wholesome that was! She was tempted to go with them. But that would not do. The boys would not wish to have an aunt or governess with them. She sighed gently and passed her hand over her forehead.

She walked down the street which ran along the lake. The little steamboat had just left the landing and was floating sprucely and brightly across the water toward the place known as Grassy Meadow, where a few quiet houses lay almost hidden under the chestnut and fruit trees, and where it was already almost dark. On the diving-board over the swimming pool, a lonely figure in a white bath-robe bobbed up and down. There were still some swimmers in the lake. "They are enjoying themselves more than I," thought Beatrice, looking enviously at the water from which came a cool peace-bringing breath. But she quickly turned the temptation from her, and in firm determination continued on her way, until she unexpectedly found herself before the villa where Baroness Fortunata was living this summer. Through the commonplace garden of bright mallow and gillyflowers, she could see the veranda extending all along the front of the house, and she caught the shimmer of white dresses shining through. Her eyes fixed straight ahead, Beatrice walked on past the white fence. To her shame, she felt her heart beating wildly. The sound of women's voices came to her ear. Beatrice hastened her steps and suddenly found herself beyond the house. She decided to go first to the village grocery, where she usually had some purchases to make, and especially to-day, as she expected a guest for supper. In a few minutes she was in Anton Meissenbichler's shop, had bought cold meat, fruit, and cheese, and had given little Lisle the package and a tip with instructions to deliver it at once to Oak Road. "And now what?" she asked herself as she stood outside in the church square, facing the open cemetery gate, where the gilded crosses glimmered reddish in the afternoon sunlight. Should she let her plans fall through merely because her heart had begun to beat faster? Never would she be able to forgive such weakness. And the punishment of fate — she felt it — would be upon her. Then there was nothing left to do, but to go back — and without further delay — back to the Baroness.

In a few moments Beatrice was down at the lake shore. Now she passed by the Lake Hotel, on whose high terrace guests sat drinking coffee or ices, then past two huge modern villas that she detested — and two seconds later her eyes met those of the Baroness, who lay on the veranda on a chaiselongue under a white sun-shade trimmed in red. Leaning against the wall, stood another woman, like a statue, with an ivory yellow face, in a billowy white dress. Fortunata had been speaking gaily, but now she was suddenly silent, and her features hardened. But her look immediately softened again, and she broke into a smile of greeting that glowed with genuine friendliness and welcome. "You jade," thought Beatrice, a bit indignant at her own expression. And she girded herself for the struggle. Fortunata's voice rang too happy in her ears. "How do you do, Frau Heinold."

"How do you do," answered Beatrice in a voice that could scarcely be heard, and as if she cared little whether her greeting reached the veranda or not. Then she pretended to go on.

"Apparently you are out for a sun and dust bath to-day, Frau Heinold." Beatrice did not doubt that Fortunata had only said this in order to start a conversation with her. For the friendship between these two was so superficial, that the joking tone did not seem particularly in place. Many years ago Beatrice had met the young actress, Fortunata Schon, a colleague of Ferdinand's, at a theatre party, and in the good fellowship of that festive evening the young couple had sat at the same table with her and her lover of that time, and had

had supper and drunk champagne together. Later, there had been fleeting meetings in the theatre or on the street, but these had never led to real conversation even of a moment's duration. Eight years ago, after her marriage to the Baron, Fortunata had left the stage and disappeared from Beatrice's vision until she had met her accidentally, here at the watering-place a few weeks ago; and after that meeting, since she could hardly avoid it, she had exchanged a few words with her on the street, in the woods, or while bathing. But to-day it pleased Beatrice that the Baroness herself seemed disposed to start a conversation and so she answered as indifferently as possible:

"A sun bath? — The sun has already set, and in the evening it's not as sultry near the lake as up above in the wood."

Fortunata had stood up; she leaned her slender, well-formed little figure over the railing and answered quickly that for her part she preferred walks in the wood, and that she found especially the one to the Hermitage quite impressive.

"What a stupid word," thought Beatrice, and asked politely why the Baroness had not taken a villa at the edge of the forest, since she preferred it.

The Baroness explained that she, or rather her husband, had rented the house from an advertisement, and that besides, she was quite well satisfied in every respect. "But why not end your walk, and drink a cup of tea with me and my friend?" And without awaiting an answer, she went toward Beatrice, gave her a smooth, white, somewhat restless hand, and led her with exaggerated friendliness to the veranda, where in the meantime, the other woman still leaned motionless against the wall in her billowy white muslin dress, in a sort of gloomy seriousness, that struck Beatrice as half sinister, half ridiculous. Fortunata presented her: "Fraulein Wilhelmine Fallehn — Frau Beatrice Heinold. You must know the name, dear Willy."

"I had the greatest regard for your husband," said Fraulein Fallehn, coolly and in a dark voice.

Fortunata offered Beatrice an upholstered wicker chair, and apologized as she stretched herself out again as comfortably as before. Never had she felt so tired and languid as here, especially in the afternoons. Most probably it was because she could not stand the experiment she was making of bathing twice a day and remaining in the water an hour each time. But when one knew so many waters as she — inland lakes, and rivers, and seas — one must finally discover that each water had its own definite character. So she continued, carefully and too elegantly as it seemed to Beatrice, while she stroked her red-dyed hair with one hand. Her long white dress, trimmed with crocheted lace, hung down over both sides of the low chair to the floor. Around her bare neck she wore a modest string of small pearls. Her pale narrow face was heavily powdered; only the tip of her nose showed pink, and her frankly painted lips were a dark red. Beatrice could not help thinking of a picture in an illustrated magazine, representing a Pierrot hanging on a lamp-post, an impression that was strengthened by the fact that Fortunata kept her eyes half closed while she spoke.

Tea and pastry were served and the conversation continued, with Wilhelmine Fallehn, who now leaned over the railing, her cup in her hand, joining in the talk even more informally than before. The subject changed from summer to winter; they spoke of the city, of the theatre, of the stupid disciples of Ferdinand Heinold, and about his unfortunate and premature death. Wilhelmine expressed in measured tones her surprise that a woman could survive the loss of such a husband, whereupon the Baroness, noticing Beatrice's surprise, smoothly remarked: "You must know, Willy, Frau Heinold has a son."

At that moment Beatrice looked at her with unbridled hostility in her eyes and she returned the look with the wicked slyness of a malicious water-sprite; in fact Beatrice imagined that Fortunata exhaled a damp breath like that from reeds or water-lilies. At the same time, she noticed that Fortunata's feet were bare in their sandals and that under her white linen dress she had nothing else on. In the meantime the Baroness

continued speaking, incessantly, in her smooth and well-bred manner. She believed that life was stronger than death, and that therefore it must always win out in the end. But Beatrice felt that this was a creature who had never loved a soul, man or woman.

Wilhelmine Fallehn suddenly put down her cup. “I must finish packing,” she explained, said a curt farewell, and disappeared through the sun-porch.

“You see, my friend is going back to Vienna to-day,” said Fortunata. “She is engaged — so to speak.”

“Ah,” said Beatrice politely.

“What would you take her for?” asked Fortunata with half-closed eyes.

“She is evidently an actress.”

Fortunata shook her head. “She was in the theatre for a while. She is the daughter of a high official. Or rather — an orphan. Her father put a bullet through his head in grief over the life she was leading. That was ten years ago. Now she is twenty-seven. She can still go far — Will you have another cup of tea?”

“No thank you, Baroness.” She took a deep breath. Now the moment had come. Her face suddenly became so determined that Fortunata unconsciously half sat up. And Beatrice began with decision: “It is really not an accident that I was passing by your house to-day. I have something to say to you, Baroness.”

“Oh,” said Fortunata; and a faint red showed under the powdered Pierrot face. She threw one arm over the back of the chaise-longue and twisted her restless fingers.

“Please allow me to be very brief,” began Beatrice.

“Just as you wish. As brief or as lengthy as you like, dear Frau Heinold.”

Beatrice was provoked at these rather condescending words and said sharply: “To put it simply and briefly, it is this: Baroness, I do not wish my son to become your lover.”

She was very calm; yes, exactly so had she felt when, nineteen years before, she had taken her future husband from the elderly widow.

The Baroness returned Beatrice’s look no less calmly. “Oh,” she said, half to herself, “you do not wish it? What a pity — Really, to tell the truth, I had not yet thought of it myself.”

“Then it will be all the easier for you to grant my wish,” answered Beatrice, a bit more heatedly. “Certainly, if it depends on me alone.”

“Baroness, it depends only on you. You know that very well. My son is still only a child.”

A look of pain appeared around Fortunata’s painted lips. “What a terrible woman I must be,” she said thoughtfully. “Shall I tell you why my friend is leaving? She had intended to spend the whole summer with me — and her fiancé was to have visited her here. And imagine — suddenly she became frightened. Afraid of me. Yes, perhaps she is right. That is how I am. I cannot answer for myself.”

Beatrice sat motionless. She had not expected such frankness that was almost shamelessness. And she answered bitingly, “Then, Baroness, since you feel that way, it will mean very little to you to—”

Fortunata rested her childish glance on Beatrice. “What you are doing, Frau Heinold,” she said in a quiet new-found voice, “is touching indeed. But clever, on my soul, it is not. Besides, I repeat that I had not even entertained the thought. In truth, Frau Heinold, I believe that women like you have no conception of Women — of my kind. Look here — two years ago, for example, I spent three whole months in a Dutch fishing village — quite alone. And I believe I was never so happy in my whole life. And so it could have happened that this summer too — Oh, I want to think it possible — I never have schemed — never in my life. Even my marriage, I assure you, was a matter of pure chance.” And she looked up as if a sudden thought had come to her. “Or perhaps you are afraid of the Baron — are you afraid that there may be some unpleasantness for — ah — for your son on that score? As far as that is concerned—” And she smilingly closed her eyes.

Beatrice shook her head. “I had really not thought of anything of the sort.”

“Still, one might think of such things. There’s no telling what husbands will do. But look here, Frau Heinold,” and she opened her eyes again, “if that question has really played no part, then it is all the more incomprehensible to me — Seriously — if I had a son of the same age as your Hugo—”

“You know his name?” asked Beatrice severely. Fortunata smiled. “You told it to me yourself — recently at the pier.”

“Quite right. I beg your pardon, Baroness.”

“Well then, dear Frau Heinold, I wanted to say — that if I had a son and he were to fall in love with a woman like you, for example — I don’t know — but I think I could hardly picture a better debût for a young man.”

Beatrice moved in her chair, as if to stand up.

“We are just two women among ourselves,” said Fortunata soothingly.

“You have no son, Baroness — and then—” She stopped. “Ah, yes, you mean that there would be another very great difference. But that difference would make the affair — for my son — even more dangerous. For you, Frau Heinold, would probably take such an affair seriously. But I, on the contrary — I — Really, Frau Heinold, the more I think about it, the more it seems to me, it would have been wiser of you to come to me with the opposite request — if you had brought your son, so to speak, to my very arms.”

“Baroness!” Beatrice was dumbfounded. She could have screamed.

Fortunata leaned back, crossed her arms under her head, and completely shut her eyes. “Such things do happen—” And she began to tell a story. “Many years ago, somewhere in the provinces, I had a friend, an actress, who was at that time about as old as I am now. She played the heroic-sentimental rôles. One day a countess came to her — the name does not concern us — You see, her son, the young count, had fallen in love with a girl of the middle classes, of good but rather poor family — civil service, or something of the sort. And the young count wanted to marry the girl at once. Besides, he was under twenty. And the countess — do you know what that clever woman did? One fine day she appeared before my friend and spoke with her, and asked her — Well, to make it short — she arranged it so that her son forgot the girl in the arms of my friend and—”

“I beg you, Baroness, to desist from such anecdotes.”

“It is not an anecdote. It is a true story and a very moral one besides. A mésalliance was prevented, and an unhappy marriage, perhaps a suicide, or a double suicide.”

“That may be,” said Beatrice, “but all that does not concern us. In any case, I am different from the countess. And for me, the thought is simply unbearable — unbearable—”

Fortunata smiled and was silent for a while, as if she wished to force an end to the sentence. Then she said, “Your son is sixteen — or seventeen?”

“Seventeen,” answered Beatrice, and was immediately angry with herself for having given the information so meekly.

Fortunata half closed her eyes, as if she were seeing a vision. And she said as if out of a dream, “Then you must get used to the thought. If it is not I, it will be another — and who can tell you” — (out of the suddenly opened eyes came a green flash*)*— “that it will be a better one?”

“Will you have the kindness, Baroness,” answered Beatrice with laboured superiority, “to leave that problem to me?”

Fortunata sighed softly. Suddenly she seemed tired, and said: “Well, then, why talk of it any more? I am willing to be agreeable. Your son has nothing to fear from me — or as we might also put it — to hope — if

you are not" — (and now her eyes were large, grey, and clear)— "entirely on the wrong track, Frau Heinold. For I — honestly, till now I had never thought that I had made any particular impression on Hugo." She let the name slip slowly out of her mouth. And she looked innocently into Beatrice's face. Beatrice had blushed darkly, and speechlessly pressed her lips together. "Then what shall I do?" asked Fortunata pitifully. "Go away? I could write my husband that the air here does not agree with me. What do you think, Frau Heinold?"

Beatrice shrugged her shoulders. "If you really are willing, I mean if you will really have the kindness not to concern yourself with my son, it will not be so very hard, Baroness — your word will suffice."

"My word? Don't you think, Frau Heinold, that in such affairs words and oaths — oh, even of women different from myself — mean very little?"

"You do not love him at all," Beatrice suddenly cried, losing all her self-control. "It would have been a whim, no more. And I am his mother. Baroness, you will not permit me to have made this step in vain."

Fortunata stood up, looked long at Beatrice, and offered her hand. She seemed suddenly to admit defeat. "Your son, from this hour, does not exist for me," she said earnestly. "Forgive me for having caused you to wait so long for this self-evident answer."

Beatrice took her hand and at that moment felt a sort of sympathy, even of pity, for the Baroness. She almost felt as if she owed her an apology. But she restrained this impulse, even avoided saying anything that might be taken as thanks, and said instead, rather lamely, "Then the affair is in order, Baroness." And she stood up.

"Must you go?" asked Fortunata in her most proper voice.

"I have detained you long enough," answered Beatrice equally politely.

Fortunata smiled, and Beatrice felt rather stupid. She allowed the Baroness to accompany her to the garden-gate, and gave her her hand once more. "Thank you for your visit," said Fortunata cordially, and added: "If I shall not be able to return it in the near future, I hope you will not take it amiss."

"Oh," said Beatrice and returned again from the street the friendly nod of the Baroness, who remained standing at the gate. Involuntarily Beatrice walked more rapidly than usual and kept to the level road. She could turn off later to the narrow forest path that led steep and straight to the Director's villa. "How do matters really stand?" she asked herself excitedly. "Am I the victor? She gave me her word. Yes. But did she not herself say that the promises of women did not mean much? No, she will not dare. She has seen to what lengths I can go." Fortunata's words kept ringing in her ears. How queerly she spoke of that summer in Holland! As if of a peaceful respite from a wildly sweet, but very difficult time. And she imagined Fortunata in a white linen dress over her naked body, running along the seashore, as if pursued by evil spirits. Perhaps it was not always pleasant, the life that was Fortunata's lot. In a way, as was the case with women of her sort, she was probably half-insane and hardly answerable for the harm that she did. Well, she could do what she wished, only she must leave Hugo in peace. Why did it have to be just he? And Beatrice smiled as she thought that she could have offered the Baroness as compensation a handsome young man, newly arrived, named Fritz Weber, with whom she would surely be just as well satisfied. Yes, she should have made the proposal. Truly, that would have put the proper spice into the conversation. What women there were! What a life they led! So that they had to go to Dutch fishing villages from time to time to recuperate. For others all life was just such a fishing village. And Beatrice smiled, but without real joy.

She stood before the gate of Welponer's villa and entered. From the tennis court, which was quite near the entrance, Beatrice could see white figures shimmering through the thin shrubbery and could hear familiar voices. As she came closer, she saw two couples standing facing each other. On one side stood the son and daughter of the house, nineteen and eighteen years of age, both resembling their father in their dark eyes and

heavy brows, and betraying by features and bearing, the Italian-Jewish stock from which they came. On the other side played Dr Bertram and his slender little sister, Leonie, the children of a well-known physician, who also had a home in the vicinity. At first Beatrice stood off a little to enjoy the strong free movement of their young bodies and the sharp flight of the balls. The fresh grace of the battle refreshed and pleased her. In a few moments the set was ended. Both couples met at the net, racquets in hand, and stood there, chatting. Their features, earlier made tense by the excitement of the game, now melted into vacuous smiles; their eyes, which before had followed the spring of the balls so keenly, now met dreamily. Beatrice realized this with strange uneasiness: it was as if the atmosphere, formerly so clean and pure, had suddenly become stormy and misty, and she could not help thinking: "How well this evening would end if suddenly, by some magic, all the inhibitions of society should be done away with, and these young people might follow without hindrance the secret, perhaps even unsuspected urge which impels them." And suddenly she realized that there was a lawless world — that she had just stepped out of such a one, and that its breath still hung around her. It was only because of that, that she saw to-day what otherwise would have escaped her innocent eyes. Only because of that? — Had she not herself secretly desired these worlds? Was she not herself once the beloved of the blessed and the damned, the naïve and the sophisticated, of scoundrels and heroes?

She was seen. They waved their hands to her in greeting. She went closer to the wire-netting and the others walked towards her. She heard their light chatter around her. But she felt as if both young men looked at her in a new way. Especially young Dr Bertram had a sort of superior scorn about his mouth and looked her up and down as he had never done before, or at least in a way that she had never before noticed. And when she left them to go at last up to the house, he jokingly caught her finger through the net and kissed it long, as if he could never stop. And he laughed insolently as a dark look of displeasure appeared on her face.

Up above, on the roofed, almost too handsome balcony, Beatrice found both couples, the Welponers and the Arbesbachers, playing tarock. She would not let them be disturbed, pushed the Director back into his chair when he tried to lay aside his cards, and then sat down between him and his wife. She said she wanted to look on at their game, but she hardly did — her glance soon wandered over the stone balustrade far over the hills which the sun was gilding. Here a feeling of security and fitness came over her that she had not felt out there among the young people — a feeling that rendered her calm, but at the same time sad. The Director's wife offered her tea in her rather condescending manner to which one had to become accustomed. But Beatrice thanked her: she had just had some. Just! How many miles away lay that house with its insolently fluttering flag? How many hours, or days ago, had she left that place for this? Shadows sank upon the park, the sun suddenly disappeared behind the mountains; from the street below, invisible from here, came indefinite sounds. Beatrice suddenly felt so alone as she had only felt in twilight hours in the country immediately after Ferdinand's death and never since. Even Hugo seemed suddenly to disappear into unreality and to be unattainably far away. She wanted him urgently and hastily took her leave of the party. The Director insisted on accompanying her. He went down the broad staircase with her, then along the pond, in the centre of which the fountain was now silent, then past the tennis court, where the two couples, in spite of the falling evening, still played so eagerly that they did not notice them as they went by. Herr Welponer threw a troubled look towards them, which Beatrice had noticed on his face before. But she felt that to-day she understood him for the first time. She knew that in the midst of the strenuous powerful life of a keen financier, the Director was disturbed by the melancholy fear of advancing age. And while he walked at her side, his tall figure bent forward slightly as if only in affectation, and while he conversed lightly with her about the wonderful summer weather, and about the excursions which they really must undertake, but for which the energy always failed them, Beatrice felt that they were both being enmeshed in an invisible net. And when he kissed her hand at

the gate of the park, he left a feeling of gentle sadness upon her, that accompanied her all the way home.

At the door, the maid told her that Hugo and another young man were in the garden, and besides, that a package had been left by the postman. Beatrice found it in her room, and smiled with pleasure. Was it not a good omen that fate had made the truth out of her unnecessary small lie? Or should it be taken as a warning: this time you were lucky. The package was from Dr Teichmann. It contained books that he had promised to send her, the memoirs and letters of great statesmen, of people, therefore, whom the little lawyer tremendously admired. Beatrice merely looked at a title-page, took off her hat in her bedroom, threw a shawl around her shoulders and went into the garden. She saw the boys below near the hedge. Without noticing her, they continued to jump high up in the air like madmen. When Beatrice came nearer, she saw that both had taken off their coats. Now Hugo ran towards her and kissed her for the first time in weeks, childishly and stormily on both cheeks. Fritz quickly slipped his coat on, bowed, and kissed Beatrice's hand. She smiled. It seemed to her that he wanted to wipe away that other melancholy kiss by the touch of his young lips.

"What are you children doing there?" asked Beatrice.

"Contest for the world's championship in high-jumping," exclaimed Fritz.

The high cornstalks on the other side of the hedge moved in the evening breeze. Below lay the lake, dull grey and misty. "You might put on your coat too, Hugo," said Beatrice, gently pushing his damp blonde hair off his forehead. Hugo obeyed. Beatrice thought that her boy looked rather unkempt and childish next to his friend, but it pleased her at the moment.

"Just think, mother," said Hugo, "Fritz wants to take the half-past nine train back to Ischl."

"But why?"

"There are no rooms to be found, Frau Heinold. There may be one in two or three days at the earliest."

"But you are not going away just because of that, Herr Fritz? We have room for you."

"I have already told him, mother, that you certainly would not object to his staying."

"Why should I? Certainly you shall spend the night here, in the guest room. What is it for, if not for just such occasions?"

"Frau Heinold, I shouldn't like to inconvenience you in any way. I know that my mother is always much upset when we have unexpected house guest? in Ischl."

"Well, that is not the case here, Herr Fritz." They finally agreed that Herr Webers baggage should be sent for from the Posthof where it had been checked, and that he should live from that time on in the attic bedroom, in exchange for which Beatrice solemnly promised to call him plain "Fritz" without the "Herr."

Beatrice gave the necessary orders in the house, and feeling it more fitting that the young friends be left to themselves for a while, did not appear until supper was served on the sun-porch. For the first time in many days, Hugo was in the best of spirits, and Fritz, too, had given up playing the grown-up man. Two school boys sat at the table, and as usual began first to criticize all their teachers, and then to discuss the outlook for their last year in school and plans for the more distant future. Fritz Weber, who wanted to be a physician, had already visited the dissecting room one day last winter, and he implied that no one else could have had such impressive experiences as he. Hugo, for his part, had long ago decided to dedicate his life to archaeology. He already had a small collection of relics — a Pompeian lamp, a piece of mosaic from the Baths of Caracalla, a pistol lock from the French invasion, and a few other things. He was planning to excavate here at the lake shore, and of course, over in Grassy Meadow where the remains of lake dwellings had been found. Fritz did not conceal his suspicions as to the authenticity of Hugo's museum pieces — above all he had always been doubtful of the pistol lock which Hugo had found in the Turkish entrenchments. Beatrice said that Fritz was too young for such scepticism, whereupon he answered that it had nothing to do with age — it was just his

natural tendency. “I prefer my Hugo to this precocious cub,” thought Beatrice, “but in truth, life will be much more difficult for him.” She looked at him. His eyes were staring far off into the distance, whither Fritz surely could not follow him. Beatrice thought further: “Naturally he has no suspicion as to the kind of person this Fortunata really is. Who knows what he imagines about her? Perhaps to him she is a sort of fairy princess whom a cruel wizard holds in captivity. How he sits there, with his ruffled blonde hair and his untidy neck-tie! He still has the child’s mouth’ — the sweet red child’s mouth — It is his father’s — the same mouth and eyes.” And she looked out into the darkness that hung so heavy and black over the meadow that it seemed as if a deep forest stood around the windows.

“May I smoke?” asked Fritz. Beatrice nodded, whereupon Fritz took out a silver cigarette case with a golden monogram and offered it politely to his hostess. Beatrice took a cigarette and let him light it for her, and was informed that Fritz got his tobacco directly from Alexandria. Hugo smoked to-day too. It was, he said, the seventh cigarette of his life. Fritz had given up counting his long ago. Besides, he announced that these cigarettes were given him by his father, who, he said, had excellent business prospects for the next year. Then he told the latest news — that his sister was going to finish her “gymnasium” in three years, and then would probably study medicine just as he himself was going to do. Beatrice glanced quickly at Hugo, who blushed slightly. Was it perhaps still the love for little Elise that he had in his heart, and which caused the painful look about his mouth?

“Couldn’t we go for a little row?” asked Fritz. “It’s such a beautiful night, and so warm.”

“Why not wait for moonlight,” said Beatrice. “It’s gloomy, floating around out there on such a dark night.”

“I think so too,” said Hugo. Fritz’s nostrils twitched contemptuously. But then the boys decided to celebrate the day by having an ice on the terrace of the Lake Hotel.

“You young scamps,” said Beatrice smilingly as they left.

Then she looked over the attic room to see that everything was in order, and attended to all her final housewifely duties before going to bed. She went to her room, undressed, and lay down in bed. Soon she heard voices outside — evidently those of the porters who were bringing Fritz’s trunk, which was now being carried up the wooden steps. Then followed a conversation between the porter and maid that lasted longer than was absolutely necessary — and then — all was silent. Beatrice took up one of the books of heroes that Dr Teichmann had sent her and began to read the memoirs of a French general. But her mind was not on it — she was restless and tired, and she felt as if the very stillness around would not let her sleep. After some time she heard the front door open, then footsteps, whispering, and laughter. The boys! They tiptoed upstairs as quietly as possible. Then from above came sounds of movement, a clatter, a murmur — then footsteps descending the stairs. That was Hugo going down to bed. Now all was quiet in the house. Beatrice put aside her book, turned out the light, and fell asleep, calm, and almost happy.

PART TWO



THEY HAD AT length reached their goal. As all had prophesied, the journey lasted longer than the architect had said. But he countered with: "Well, what did I say? Three hours from Oak Road. It's not my fault if we started at nine instead of eight."

"But now it's half-past one," remarked Fritz. "Yes," said Frau Arbesbacher sadly, "that's always how he measures time."

"When there are women about," answered her husband, "you always have to add fifty per cent. It's an old, old story, especially when you go shopping with them." And he laughed dully.

Young Dr Bertram, who since the beginning of the excursion had steadily kept near Beatrice, spread his green coat out on the grass. "Please, Frau Heinold," he said, pointing to it with a gentle smile. His words and looks had been full of meaning ever since the day two weeks ago, when he had kissed her finger through the tennis net.

"No, thanks," answered Beatrice, "I have my own, you see." And at a glance from her, Fritz flung open her Scotch plaid, which he had been carrying on his arm. But the wind was so strong up there on the mountain side, that the blanket flapped like a giant veil until Beatrice caught it at the other end, and with Fritz's help, spread it out on the ground.

"There's always a nice little breeze blowing up here," said the architect. "But what a pretty sight, eh what?" And he made a sweeping gesture over the whole landscape. They were on a broad, closely cropped meadow that sloped gently and left the view free on all sides. All of them contemplated the scene for some time in silent pleasure. The men had taken off their waterproof hats. Hugo's hair was more untidy than ever, the bristling white hair of the architect was stirred too by the wind, even Fritz's well-combed crop underwent some damage, and it was only Bertram's straight blonde hair that the wind could not disturb, though it blew so steadily over the height. Arbesbacher named several of the mountain peaks across the lake, together with their respective heights, and pointed out one peak which, he said, had never been reached from the north. Dr Bertram said this was a mistake, for he himself had climbed it last year.

"Then you were the first," said the architect.

"That's possible," answered Bertram, nonchalantly, and called attention immediately to another mountain that looked much less formidable, but that he had never dared climb. He knew just how much he dared attempt. Above all, he was not foolhardy, and had no especial fondness for death. He pronounced the word "death" very lightly, in the voice of the expert who disdains to speak seriously of his specialty before the layman.

Beatrice had stretched out on the plaid and looked up at the dull, blue sky over which thin white summer clouds were passing. She knew that Dr Bertram was speaking only to her — that he was placing at her disposal all his most interesting qualities — pride and knowledge, contempt of death, and love of life — to choose from as she would. But it had not the slightest effect on her.

The youngest members of the party — Fritz and Hugo — had brought the lunch in their packs. Leonie helped them unpack and then buttered the bread in her graceful, motherly way, not forgetting to take off her tan gloves and to slip them into her brown leather belt. The architect uncorked the bottles, Dr Bertram poured the wine and offered the full glasses to the ladies, looking past Beatrice with deliberate indifference, towards the mountain tops across the lake. They all found it delightful to be partaking of bread and butter sandwiches

and tangy Terlan wine up there, with the mountain wind blowing around them. To finish off the lunch, there was a large cake that Frau Director Welponer had sent to Beatrice that morning, together with an apology for herself and her family, because they were unable to join them, although they would have enjoyed it so much. Their refusal was not unexpected. To pry the Welponer family loose from their garden was no easy task, as Leonie said. The architect took the liberty of reminding the honourable ones present that they too could not boast much of their enterprise. How had they been spending these beautiful summer days?—" lackadaisied, "as he put it, around on the forest paths, or bathed in the lake, or played tennis and tarock — but how many plans and preparations had been necessary before they finally decided to undertake even this little excursion — which, all told, was but a short walk?

Beatrice thought to herself that she had only been here once before — with Ferdinand — ten years ago — the same summer, therefore, when they had moved into their new home. But it was hard to realize that it was the same meadow where she was to-day — in her memory it had been so different — so much broader and lighter. A soft melancholy crept into her heart. How alone she was amongst all these people! What did the happy chatter all around mean to her? There they all sat on the meadow, letting their glasses clink! Fritz touched his glass to Beatrice's; but after she had long emptied hers, he still stood motionlessly holding his in his hands and staring at her. "What a look," thought Beatrice. "Even more enraptured and thirsty than those that he has been directing towards me for the past few days — or do I just imagine it, because I have drunk three glasses of wine in such quick succession?" She stretched out again on her plaid beside Frau Arbesbacher, who had fallen fast asleep, and looked blinkingly into the air, where she saw a tiny smoke cloud rising gracefully — probably from Bertram's cigarette, though she could not see him. But she felt his glance running along the whole length of her body to the nape of her neck, until she almost thought she felt his touch, but realized that it was only the long grass that was tickling her.

The voice of the architect came to her as if from a great distance, as he told the boys of the time when the little train did not yet come to the village below. And although hardly fifteen years had gone by, he tried to spread an atmosphere of grey antiquity over that period. Among other stories, he told one of a drunken coachman who had once driven him right into the lake and whom he had thrashed almost to death for it. Then Fritz related the following heroic anecdote in his best manner: once in the Wiener Wald, he had made a very timid boy take to his heels by merely putting his hand into his pocket as if he had a revolver there. For it was a question, as he took care to explain, not of the revolver, but of presence of mind. "It's a pity," said the architect, "that one does not always have a six-barreled, loaded presence of mind about one." The boys laughed. How well Beatrice knew that laugh, that double laugh, that she could now enjoy so often at home during meal times and in her garden; and how happy she was that the boys got along so well together! Recently they had gone away together lor two days, fully equipped, on an excursion to Gosauseen, as a preparation for the September tour that they were planning. Besides, they had been better friends in Vienna than Beatrice had known. She had learned from others something that Hugo had stubbornly kept silent — that some evenings, after an hour in the gymnasium, both would go to a coffee house on the other side of the village to play billiards. But in any case, she was deeply grateful to Fritz for coming to them at that time. Hugo's mood had become again as fresh and untroubled as ever, the painful look had left his face, and surely he did not think of the terrible woman with the Pierrot face and the red-dyed hair. And Beatrice could not deny that she had comported herself blamelessly. Just a few days ago she had by chance been standing near her on the gallery of the bath house, just when Hugo and Fritz had come racing in as usual from the open lake. They reached the slippery steps simultaneously, and, supporting themselves with one arm, they had splashed each other's faces, dived and appeared again far out in the open lake. Fortunata, in her white bath-

robe, had looked on carelessly with an absent smile, as at the play of children, and then had looked again out over the lake with lost sad eyes, so that Beatrice in mild discontent, and with an almost guilty feeling, recalled the talk in the white-flagged villa, that was ever becoming dimmer and less important to her, and that the Baroness herself seemed to have long forgiven and forgotten. One evening Beatrice had seen the Baron seated on a bench in the wood. He evidently had come for a short visit. He had light blonde hair, a beardless, wrinkled, and yet young-looking face with steel-grey eyes, wore a light blue flannel suit, smoked a short pipe, and had beside him on the bench, a sailor's cap. He looked to Beatrice like a captain who had come from a distant land, and who must immediately go back to sea. Fortunata sat beside him, small and well-bred, her nose pinkish as usual, with tired arms, like a doll that the distant captain could take out or put back into its case according to his pleasure.

All of this went through Beatrice's mind as she lay on the meadow, while the wind blew and grassblades tickled her neck. Around her now everything was silent; all of them seemed to be asleep; only at a short distance away somebody was whistling. Unconsciously Beatrice looked with blinking eyes for the small smoke cloud, and immediately saw it rising thin and silver-grey into the air. Beatrice raised her head slightly — she saw Dr Bertram leaning his head on both arms, his eyes fastened on the low-cut neck of her dress. He was speaking and it was quite possible that he had been speaking for a long time, in fact that his speech had awakened her out of her half-sleep. Now he asked her whether she would be interested in a mountain climbing party, in a real climb, or whether she were afraid of dizziness — it didn't have to be a peak, it could be a plateau as well; only he wanted to go higher than the others, so much higher, that they could not follow. To look with her from a high peak into the valley — that would be divine. When he got no answer, he said: "Well, Frau Beatrice?"

"I'm asleep," answered Beatrice.

"Then allow me to be your dream," he began, and continued — he could picture no more beautiful death than to jump into the deep — one's whole life would rush by in such frightful clearness, and it would naturally be more pleasant in proportion as to how one had lived, and if one had not the slightest fear, only a never before experienced thrill, and a sort — yes, a sort of metaphysical curiosity. And he buried his burned-out cigarette stub in the ground with quick fingers. Besides, he continued, he was not particularly interested in such an end. On the contrary, even if he were obliged to see so much misery and horror in his work, for that reason, he treasured everything light and pure in life all the more. Wouldn't Frau Beatrice like to see the hospital garden? There was a very curious and charming atmosphere about it, especially on autumn evenings. You see, he was now living in the hospital. And if Beatrice would like to take tea with him at the same time —

"You're quite mad," said Beatrice, sitting up and looking with clear eyes into the blue-gold atmosphere which the dull mountain-peaks seemed to absorb. Drunk with the sun, a little weak, she stood up, shook out her dress, and noticed, how, quite against her will, she looked wearily down at Dr Bertram. She quickly looked away towards Leonie, who stood quite alone at some distance from them, like a picture, a fluttering veil thrown about her head. The architect sat with crossed legs on the grass, playing cards with the boys.

"I say, Frau Beatrice, soon you won't have to give Hugo any more pocket money," he called out, "he can support himself comfortably out of today's winnings in tarock."

"Then it would be wise for us to start homeward before you are completely ruined." Fritz looked at Beatrice with glowing cheeks. She smiled at him. Bertram stood up, looked at the sky, and then down over her bit by bit. "What is the matter with you all?" she thought. "And what is the matter with me?" For suddenly she noticed that she allowed the lines of her body to play as alluringly as possible. Seeking

assistance, she turned her look toward her son, who was playing out his last card, his childish face aglow, his clothes unspeakably untidy. He won the game and proudly collected one crown and twenty heller from the architect. They got ready for the descent, all except Frau Arbesbacher, who was still asleep. “Let her lie,” joked the architect. But at that moment, she stirred, rubbed her eyes, and was ready for the homeward journey long before the others. For a while the path led sharply downhill, then it ran almost level through young forests; at the next bend, they could see the lake which disappeared at once. Beatrice, who at first had joined Hugo and Fritz and had run ahead with them, soon remained behind; Leonie came up to her and spoke of a sailing regatta that was to take place soon. Beatrice still remembered clearly the race seven years ago in which Ferdinand had won second prize in his boat, the “Roxana.” Where was she now? After so many triumphs she led a lonely inglorious life down there in the boat-house. The architect took advantage of this opportunity to say that this year boating was as much neglected as all other sports. Leonie expressed the opinion that there was some enervating influence coming from the Welponer house, whose effect no one could escape. The architect, too, believed that the Welponers were in no way suited to agreeable society, and his wife said it was due most of all to Frau Welponer’s arrogance and because she had not the slightest need for amusement. They suddenly were silent, as they saw the Director sitting on a worm-eaten, broken-down bench at the turn in the road. He stood up; and his monocle on its narrow silk ribbon hung down over his white piqué vest. He said that he had taken the liberty of coming to meet them and invite them in the name of his wife to partake of a small “Jause,” which was awaiting the tired wanderers on the shady veranda. At the same time, he looked wearily at them all, and Beatrice noted that when he looked at Bertram, his face darkened; and she suddenly knew that the Director was envious of the young man. But she was immediately ashamed of such a foolish assumption. She lived on in the present, quietly and unquestioningly, in undisturbed faithfulness to him alone whose voice even now rang clearer in her memory than all the voices of the living, and whose eyes still shone brighter than all those living ones.

The Director remained behind with Beatrice. First he talked of various unimportant events of the day, of some friends who had recently arrived, of the death of the miller, aged ninety-five, about the ugly house that a Salzburg architect was building in Grassy Meadow, and then, as if by accident, reminded her of the time when neither his house, nor the Heinold house had yet been built, and when both families had lived all summer in the Lake Hotel. He recalled several trips they had taken together on the then little known roads, and one sailing party in the “Roxana,” which ended in a terrible storm; spoke of the housewarming party at the Heinold house when Ferdinand had made two of his fellow-actors dead drunk, and finally, of Ferdinand’s last rôle in a modern, rather tragic play, in which he had so perfectly played the part of a youth of twenty. What an inimitable artist he had been! And what an excellent man! A man of eternal youth, one might say. A wonderful contrast to that class of people in whose numbers he must unfortunately include himself, of people who were not made to bring either themselves or others happiness. And as Beatrice looked at him questioningly, he said: “I, dear Frau Beatrice, I was born old, so to speak. Do you know what that means? I shall try to explain. You see, we who were born old — during our lives we let one mask after another fall from us, until, at the age of eighty or thereabouts, sometimes sooner, we show our real faces to the world. The others, the youthful ones — and such a one was Ferdinand (quite contrary to his habit he called him by his Christian name) — they always remain young, remain children, and therefore are obliged to put on one mask after another if they do not wish to astonish other people too much. Perhaps these masks come of themselves over their faces, and they do not know that they wear them, and only have a strange dark feeling that something does not fit in their lives — because they always feel young. Such a man was Ferdinand.” Beatrice listened to the Director in surprise and with rising defiance. She could not help feeling that he had conjured up

Ferdinand's shadow intentionally, as if he had been assigned to guard her honour, to warn her of some near danger, and to protect her. Really, he might have spared himself the trouble. What gave him the right, what grounds had he for appointing himself the representative and guardian of Ferdinand's memory? What was there in her actions that aroused such insulting suspicions in his mind? If she could play and laugh to-day and wear bright colours again, could any unprejudiced onlooker interpret it as anything but the necessity of living on in conformity with the others? But the thought that she might ever be really happy again, or might belong again to any man, filled her with disgust and horror; and that horror, as she learned in many sleepless nights, became only deeper, when some inexplicable flashes of longing rushed through her blood and passed by unfulfilled. And again she glanced quickly at the Director, who now walked silently beside her. But she was terrified to discover the smile on her lips, that in spite of herself, came from the depths of her soul, and that unerringly, almost shamelessly, said more plainly than words: "I know that you desire me, and I am glad." She saw his eyes suddenly flare up into a burning question, which he immediately controlled and quieted. And he addressed an indifferent polite word to Frau Arbesbacher, who was just a few steps ahead of them, for the small party, now that they were nearing their goal, had all come together again. Suddenly young Dr Bertram was at Beatrice's side, and by his bearing, look, and speech, implied that the relations between him and Beatrice had become more closely bound on this picnic, and that she must admit the fact that she was beginning to yield to his graces. But she remained cool and distant and grew more distant at each step. And when they reached the gate of Welponer's Villa, she announced, to the surprise of everyone, including herself, that she was tired and would prefer to go home. They tried to dissuade her. But since the Director himself expressed only mild disappointment, they did not insist. She was undecided as to whether she would return for supper, which they had agreed to take together at the Lake Hotel, but had no objections to Hugo's joining them in any case. "I'll take good care," said the architect, "that he does not drink himself silly." Beatrice took her leave. A feeling of great relief came over her as she took the road homewards and she was happy in the prospect of the few undisturbed hours that were to be hers.

At home she found a letter from Dr Teichmann, and was mildly surprised, not so much that he again gave a sign of life, as that she had almost forgotten his existence in the excitement of the past days. It was only after she had removed the dust of the day's journey and was sitting before her toilet-table in a comfortable house gown, that she opened the letter about whose contents she was not in the least bit curious. The letter opened, as usual, with reports on business matters, for Dr Teichmann believed it his duty to serve Beatrice first of all as her solicitor, and he informed her with misplaced humour of the success of a little venture of hers in which he was able to gain quite a sum of money for her. Finally, he told her, in an elaborately casual tone, that his vacation journey that year would take him past Oak Road, and that he dared hope — as he wrote — that through the bushes he might catch sight of a gay garment, or that a friendly eye might smile at him and might invite him to linger, even though it be for just a moment's chat. He did not forget to send regards to the Arbesbachers and the "noble Lord and Lady of the castle, together with their worthy offspring," as he expressed it, and the other friends, whose acquaintance he had made last year when he spent three days at the Lake Hotel. Beatrice found it strange that last year seemed so far away and like a different period of her life, although it had been hardly any different from this summer. Even the flirtations on the part of the Director and young Dr Bertram had not been wanting. It was only that she herself had gone on unperturbed amongst all their looks and words; yes, that she had hardly noticed them, and was only now conscious of them in reminiscence. This might be due to the fact that she had very little to do with all these summer acquaintances in the city. Since the death of her husband, after she had broken connections with the circle of artists and theatrical people, she had led a retiring and monotonous life. Only her mother, who lived in a suburb in an old

mansion near the factory that her father had once managed, and a few distant relatives, found their way to her quiet home which had become quite bourgeois and commonplace again. And when Dr Teichmann would appear lor tea and a little chat, it meant a diversion to her, that gave her real pleasure, she realized now with surprise.

Thoughtfully shaking her head, she laid the letter down and looked into the garden over which the early August twilight was spreading. The comfortable feeling of solitude had gradually left her and she wondered whether it would not be wiser to go back to the Welponers, or later to go to the Lake Hotel. But then she restrained the impulse, a little ashamed that she should have succumbed so completely to the allurement of society and that the pensive magic of such solitary summer evenings that formerly had so charmed her, should have disappeared forever. She threw a thin shawl over her shoulders and went into the garden. Here the melancholy she had been seeking came over her, and she knew in the depths of her soul that she could never walk up and down these paths that she had so often walked with Ferdinand, on the arm of another man. At this moment, one thing above all was clear to her: if Ferdinand in those distant days had made her swear not to cast aside any opportunity for happiness, certainly he had not pictured a marriage with such a man as Dr Teichmann; any passionate, though perhaps merely passing adventure would be much more likely to win his approval in his celestial realm. And with horror she realized that a picture had sprung up in her mind: she saw herself up on the meadow in the twilight in the arms of Dr Bertram. But she merely saw the picture, no wish accompanied it; cool and distant, it hung in the air like a vision and disappeared.

She stood at the lower end of the garden, leaned her arms on the fence, and looked downwards to the lights of the town blinking below. The voices of an evening boating party, singing out on the lake, came to her with startling clearness through the quiet air. The clock in the church tower struck nine. Beatrice sighed softly, then turned around and slowly went back across the lawn to the house. On the veranda, she found the table set with the usual three places. She let the maid bring her her supper and ate it without any particular relish, feeling a useless, aimless sadness. While eating, she picked up a book — it was the memoirs of a French general, which interested her to-day even less than usual. The clock struck half-past nine, and, loneliness depressing her more every moment, she decided to leave the house after all, and to find the party at the Lake Hotel. She stood up, put her long silk coat over her house gown, and started out. As she went past the Baroness's house at the lake, she noticed that it was completely dark; and she remembered that she had not seen Fortunata for several days. Had she gone away with the distant Captain? But as Beatrice looked back again, she thought she saw a light behind one of the closed blinds. Why did it trouble her? She didn't care any more. On the high terrace of the Lake Hotel, whose electric arc lights were already out, she found her party, seated around a table, in the faint light of two wall brackets. Conscious suddenly of the too serious expression on her face, she forced an empty smile to her lips. She was greeted warmly, shook hands with all of them in a row, the Director, the architect, their wives, and young Fritz Weber. There was no one else present. "Where is Hugo?" she asked, somewhat perturbed.

"He left this very moment," answered the architect. "Queer that you didn't meet him."

Unconsciously Beatrice glanced at Fritz, who with an embarrassed, stupid, childish smile, twirled his beer glass and averted his eyes with obvious intent. Then she sat down between him and Frau Welponer, and in order to overcome the menacing thoughts that were arising in her, she began to talk with exaggerated cheerfulness. She was very sorry that Frau Welponer had not been with them on the charming picnic; she asked about the brother and sister, Bertram and Leonie; and finally related that at supper she had read some French memoirs and letters of great men. She found no pleasure in novels and such things any more. It seemed that the others agreed with her. "Love stories are only for young folks," said the architect— "I mean

for children, for in a way, we are all still young folks." Fritz too said that he preferred scientific works, or especially books on travel. While he spoke, he moved quite close to Beatrice, and pressed his knee against hers as if by accident; his napkin fell down, he bent down to pick it up, and tremblingly stroked her ankle. Was the boy mad? And he continued speaking, excitedly, with glowing eyes: as soon as he was a doctor, he would join some large expedition, perhaps to Tibet or darkest Africa. The others smiled indulgently at his words; only the Director — Beatrice noted it well — looked at him with sullen envy. As the party arose to go home, Fritz said that he would first take a solitary walk on the lake shore. "Alone?" asked the architect, "that isn't so easy to believe." But Fritz answered that walking alone on summer evenings was one of his particular passions; just recently he had come home about one in the morning, and in fact with Hugo, who at times accompanied him on these nightly jaunts. And as he saw the restless, questioning glance that Beatrice turned to him, he added: "It is quite possible that I shall meet Hugo somewhere down at the lake to-night, if he hasn't gone rowing as he sometimes does."

"This is interesting news," said Beatrice, shaking her head doubtfully.

"Yes, these summer evenings," sighed the architect.

"What have you to say about it?" asked his wife enigmatically.

Frau Welponer, who had gone down the steps of the terrace ahead of the others, remained standing for a moment and looked at the heavens, as if seeking something. Then she let her head sink again in a strange hopeless way. The Director was silent. But in his silence, burned hatred of summer nights, youth, and happiness.

They had hardly reached the lake shore, when Fritz slipped away, as if in fun, and disappeared into the dark. The two couples accompanied Beatrice home. Slowly and with difficulty, they climbed the steep road up the hill. "Why did Fritz rim away so suddenly?" Beatrice wondered. "Will he find Hugo at the shore? Did he ever go rowing with him in the evening? Is there a compact between them? Does Fritz know where Hugo is at this moment? Does he know?" And she had to pause a moment, for it seemed to her that her heart had suddenly stopped beating. "As if I did not know where Hugo is! As if I had not known it for days! "...

"I rather wish somebody would build a railway up this hill," said the architect.' He had taken his wife's arm, which, as far as Beatrice could remember, he had never done before. The Director and his wife walked together, in step, both bent and silent. As Beatrice stood before her door, she suddenly knew why Fritz had stolen away down there. He had wanted to avoid going alone into the house with her at night, in the presence of all the others. And she was grateful for the wise gallantry of the young man. The Director kissed Beatrice's hand. "Whatever may happen to you," he murmured, half trembling, "I shall understand, and you will have a friend in me."

"Let me alone," answered Beatrice as silently as he. The two couples parted. The Director and his wife disappeared with strange suddenness into the darkness, where wood, mountains, and heaven all ran together. The Arbesbachers took the road towards the other side, where the path was more open, and over which the soft, blue, starry night spread on high.

When the door had closed behind her, Beatrice thought: "Shall I look in Hugo's room? What for? I know that he is not at home. I know that he is there where the light shone from behind closed blinds." And she remembered that just now, on her return walk, she had again passed the house, and that it had seemed a house in the dark to her, like the others. But she did not doubt any more that at this hour her son was in the villa that she had passed thoughtlessly, and yet full of foreboding. And she knew too that she was to blame — yes, she alone — for she had let it happen. With that one visit to Fortunata, she had imagined that she had fulfilled all her motherly duties; after that she had let it go on as it would — out of laziness, out of weariness, out of

cowardice — she had seen nothing, known nothing, thought nothing. Hugo was at Fortunata's at this moment, and not for the first time. A picture came to her, that made her shudder and she hid her lace in her hands as if to banish it in that way. Slowly she opened the door to her bedroom. A sadness came over her, a feeling that she had taken leave of something that would never return. The time was past when Hugo was a child, her child. Now he was a young man, one who lived his own life, of which he could no longer tell his mother. Never more would she stroke his cheeks and hair — never more could she kiss his sweet child's mouth as before. Now for the first time, since she had lost him, she was alone.

She sat on her bed and slowly began to undress. How long would he stay away? Probably the whole night. And in the grey of early morning, very quietly, in order not to awaken his mother, he would slip through the hall into his room. How often had it happened already? How many nights had he been with her? Many? No, not many. For a few days he had been on a walking tour through the country. Yes, if he had spoken the truth! But he had not been telling the truth lately. Not for a long time. In the winter he played billiards in a coffee house in the suburbs, and where else he might have been, who knew? And suddenly a thought made the blood run faster through her veins: Was he perhaps even then Fortunata's lover: On the day when she had paid her ridiculous visit to the villa down near the lake? And had the Baroness played a shabby trick on her, and then, heart to heart with Hugo, had she scoffed and laughed at her? Yes — even that was possible. For what did she know to-day of her boy who had grown to manhood in the arms of a wanton? Nothing — nothing.

She leaned on the sill of her open window, and looked into the garden and far away to the dark mountain peaks on the other side of the lake. Sharply outlined, towered the one that Dr Bertram had never dared attempt to climb. How did it happen that he was not there at the hotel? If he had guessed that she might return, he would surely have been there. Was it not strange that they should still desire her, who was the mother of a boy who already spent his nights with a mistress? Why strange? She was as young, perhaps younger than, Fortunata. And all at once, she felt the outlines of her body under her light garment, with agonizing distinctness, and even a sort of painful pleasure. A noise outside on the path made her jump. She knew it was Fritz coming home. Where could he have been all this time? Did he, too, perhaps have his little adventure here in the country? She smiled wearily. No, surely not he. For he was a little in love with her. And really — no wonder. She was just at the age that would appeal to so green a youth. Evidently he had wanted to cool his longing out in the night air; and she was a little sorry for him because just to-night the heavens hung so heavy and misty over the lake. And suddenly she remembered such a sultry summer night a long time ago, when her husband had forced her against her will to go with him from the soft privacy of their chamber into the garden, and there, in the dark black shadows of the trees, to exchange wild and tender caresses. Then she thought of the cool morning when a thousand birds had awakened her to a sweet, heavy sadness, and she trembled. Where was all that now? Did it not seem that the garden into which she was looking had preserved the memory of that night better than she herself, and that it might be able in some wonderful way to betray her to those who understood the language of the dumb? And she felt as if night in person stood out in the garden, ghostly and mysterious — yes, as if each house, each garden, had its own night, that was quite different from, deeper and more trustworthy than, that meaningless blue darkness that spread above the sleeping world, unattainably far away. And that night that belonged to her, stood full of secrets and dreams before her window, and stared into her face with blind eyes. She unconsciously put out her hands as if to ward off the vision; then she returned to her room, went slowly to her mirror, and with a tired droop of the shoulders, began to take down her hair. It must be past midnight. She was very tired, and at the same time far too wide awake. Of what use were all her meditations, all her memories, all her dreams? Of what use were all her fears and hopes? Hopes? Where was there any hope for her? She went again to the window and carefully

pulled the blinds. “Even from here, it shines out into the night, into my night,” she thought. She locked the door leading to the hall; then, according to her old careful habit, she opened the door into her little parlour for a last look. She drew back, frightened. In the semi-darkness, she saw the figure of a man, standing upright in the middle of the room. “Who is there?” she asked. The figure moved. She recognized Fritz. “What are you doing here?” she asked.

He rushed to her and snatched both of her hands. Beatrice pulled them away. “You are not in your right mind,” she said.

“Pardon me, dear Frau Heinold,” he whispered, “but I — I don’t know what to do any more.”

“That is very simple,” answered Beatrice. “Go to bed.” He shook his head. “Go, go,” she said, and turned back to her room, and was about to lock the door behind her. Then she felt his arms thrust gently but awkwardly around her neck. She shrank away, but turned around involuntarily and put out her arm, as if to push Fritz back. He took her hand and put it to his lips. “But, Fritz,” she said, more mildly than had been her intention.

“I shall go quite mad,” he whispered.

She smiled. “I believe you are already mad.”

“I should have waited here all night,” he whispered again. “I had not dreamt that you would open this door. I just wanted to be here near you.”

“Now, go to your room at once. Do you hear me? Or you will make me really angry.” He had taken both her hands.

“I beg you, Frau Heinold.”

“Don’t be ridiculous, Fritz! That’s enough. Let go my hands. That’s right. And now, go.” He had let her hands drop; and then she felt the warmth of his lips on her cheek. “I’m going mad. I’ve been in this room before.”

“What?”

“Yes, I spent half of the night here recently, until it was almost light. I couldn’t help it. I should like always to be near you.”

“Don’t say such foolish things.”

He stammered on: “I beg of you, Frau Heinold, Frau Beatrice — Beatrice!”

“That’s enough — really you are — what is the matter with you? Shall I call? But for God’s sake! Think then — think of Hugo.”

“Hugo is not at home. No one hears us.” Quickly that burning pain again rose within her. Then suddenly, with shame and fright she realized that she was glad of Hugo’s absence. She felt Fritz’s warm lips on hers, and a longing sprang up in her which she had never felt to such an extent before, not even in those far-off days. “Who can blame me for it?” she thought. “To whom am I accountable?” And with desirous arms, she drew the glowing boy to her.

PART THREE

AS BEATRICE CAME out of the dark shadow of the forest into the open, the gravel road stretched out before her, white and burning hot, and she was almost sorry that she had left the Welponers so early in the afternoon. But since Frau Welponer had departed for her usual after dinner nap as soon as they left the table, and since her son and daughter had also disappeared without any apology, Beatrice would have been obliged to remain alone with the Director, a thing that she must avoid at all events, after the occurrences of the past few days. His attempts to win her favour had become altogether too open; in fact, he had dropped certain hints that gave her to believe that he would be ready to leave his wife and children at her will — and not only that, but that union with her would mean above all that wished for flight from unbearable household ties. For, with her lately acquired painful insight into the relationships of man, Beatrice had realized that that marriage had been deeply undermined, and that a collapse could follow at any time, unexpectedly and without any special reason. She had often noticed the exaggerated care with which the husband and wife spoke to each other, as if the hatred which lowered quiveringly in the hard lines around their mouths might break out at any moment into words that could never be made good again. But not until Fritz had told her last night of the almost incredible rumour, which she still did not believe — of a love affair between her dead husband and Frau Welponer, did she allow herself to take part with any real interest in the cause for the disturbance. And although the rumour had been troubling her even during dinner, while indifferent conversation went on around the table, now as she walked homewards down the path through the glittering summer air, from whose burning breath every living being seemed to have fled to the shelter of closed rooms, Fritz's rude intimations began to work with painful activity on her mind. Why, she asked herself, had he spoken of it, and especially that night? Was it in revenge because she had told him jokingly that he had better remain at Ischl with his parents, whom he was going to visit in the morning, instead of coming back the same evening as he had intended? Had a jealous suspicion awakened in him, that with all the charm of his youth, still he meant nothing to her but a handsome young boy, whom she could send home without further ado, when the game was at an end? Or had he only succumbed to his inclination to indiscreet talk, which she had been obliged to curb several times before, and even quite recently, when he evinced a desire to tell her about Hugo's relations with Fortunata? Or was the conversation between Fritz's parents, that Ee said he had recently overheard, just a child of his fanciful brain — just as his visit to the dissection room, of which he had told her on the day of his arrival, had recently turned out to be empty boasting? But although he had undertaken to tell of the talk of his parents in good faith, might he not have heard wrongly, or misunderstood? This last idea was all the more probable, since not the slightest whisper of that rumour had come to Beatrice before. Busied with such thoughts, Beatrice reached her villa. Since Hugo had ostensibly gone on a tour, and the maid was having the day off, Beatrice found herself alone in the house. She undressed in her room, and submitting to the heavy weariness that often came over her these summer afternoons, she stretched out on her bed. Consciously enjoying the solitude, the peace, the very faint light, she lay there a while with open eyes. In the large mirror that hung opposite her, she could see the life-size bust-portrait of her husband reflected in faint outline from the wall over her bed. She could see clearly only a red spot that she knew represented the carnation in his button-hole. In the early days after Ferdinand's death, this picture had continued to lead a strangely personal life for Beatrice. She saw it smiling or sad, happy or distressed — in fact, at times, she imagined that in some way the painted features expressed unconcern or despair over their own death. In the course of years,

however, it had become dumb and silent, and remained a piece of painted canvas and nothing more. But at this hour, it seemed to want to live again. And although Beatrice could not see very clearly in the mirror, it seemed to her that it sent an ironic look down over her; and memories awoke within her that, though they had seemed harmless, or even gay before, now came to her mind with a new bitter meaning. And in place of the one on whom her suspicions had been fastened, a whole row of women went by, whose features she had forgotten, but who, as she suddenly realized, had all been Ferdinand's loves — admirers who wanted his autograph or photograph, young actresses who took lessons from him, society women whose salons he and Beatrice had often frequented, fellow-actresses who had fallen into his arms as wives, brides, or betrayed ones. And she asked herself whether it were not his consciousness of guilt that had made him so mild and so wisely indifferent, as it seemed, to any unfaithfulness that Beatrice might commit against his memory. And all of a sudden, as if he had thrown aside the useless, uncomfortable mask that he had worn long enough, both alive and dead, he stood before her mind with his red carnation and all — a silly comedian for whom she was nothing but an industrious housewife, the mother of his son, and a woman whom one embraced once in a while when, on a mild summer evening, the magic of propinquity so disposed one. And like his picture, his voice suddenly changed mysteriously. It no longer had the noble ring that sounded more beautiful in her memory than the voices of all the living. It rang empty, affected, and false. But at once she knew that it was not really his voice that she now heard, but that of another who recently had ventured — here in her own house — had ventured to ape the voice, intonation, and actions of her dead husband.

She sat up in bed, threw one arm over the pillow, and stared in horror into the darkness of her chamber. Now for the first time, in this peaceful hour, she recalled that event in all its atrocity. It had happened a week ago, on a Sunday as to-day — she was sitting in the garden with her son and — she thought the word with a grimace — her lover. Suddenly a young man had appeared, tall and dark, with shining eyes, in a sports outfit, with a yellowish-red tie. She did not recognize him until the cheerful greeting of the others informed her that Rudi Beratoner stood before her, the same young man who had visited Hugo several times the past winter to borrow books from him, and who, as she knew, was one of the two who Hugo had told her had spent that spring night in the Prater with the girls of questionable repute. He was just coming from Ischl, where he had looked for Fritz in vain at his parents' home. Naturally he was invited to dinner. He accepted gladly, a little too boisterously, and proved to be indefatigable in relating hunting stories and all sorts of anecdotes; and his younger friends, who seemed like children in comparison with his precociousness, looked at him in astonishment. He also showed a capacity for drink that was far beyond his years. Since the boys did not want to remain behind him, and since even Beatrice allowed herself to drink more than usual, the spirit in the house was much easier than was usual. Beatrice, who noticed with gratitude and emotion that in spite of all the gaiety her guest acted with great respect for her, imagined, as she often did in these days, that all that had happened recently, the truth of which she could not doubt, was only some sort of dream that could be repaired. For a moment, as formerly, she had put her arm around Hugo's shoulders and played with his hair, but she looked coquettishly at Fritz at the same time, and forthwith felt strange emotions over her own fate and the world. Later she noticed that Fritz was whispering very eagerly to Rudi and seemed to be persuading him to do something very important. She asked gaily what terrible thing the two young men were plotting; Beratoner did not want to answer, but Fritz explained — there was no reason for keeping it a secret — the fact was commonly known that Rudi could impersonate actors remarkably well, not only the living, but even the — but now he stopped. But Beatrice, very much excited and already slightly intoxicated, turned quickly to Rudi Beratoner, and asked somewhat hoarsely: "Then you can impersonate Ferdinand Heinold too?" She pronounced the famous name as if it belonged to a stranger. Beratoner did not want to hear of it. He did not

understand Fritz at all — formerly he had practised such tricks, but not for a long time now; besides, he naturally could not recall the voices of those he had not heard for a long time, and if he had to do something, he preferred to sing a couplet in the style of any comedian they might choose. But Beatrice would not allow any evasion. She wanted nothing more than to take advantage of this opportunity. She trembled with longing to hear the beloved voice, at least in reflected splendour. That that desire might mean something blasphemous did not strike her in her befogged state of mind. At last Beratoner let himself be persuaded. And with beating heart, Beatrice heard at first Hamlet's monologue, "To be or not to be," ringing through the free summer air in Ferdinand's heroic sounding voice, then verses from Tasso, then some long forgotten words out of a long-forgotten play — she heard the beloved voice, deeply booming and melting softly away. With closed eyes, she drank it in, full of wonder, until suddenly she heard, still in Ferdinand's voice, but now in his familiar everyday tone: "Grüss Gott, Beatrice!" Then she opened her eyes in great fright and saw before her an insolent, spoiled face, around whose lips there still remained fading traces, like ghostly reminders, of Ferdinand's smile; she met Hugo's wandering glance and the half tragic, half stupid simper on Fritz's face; and heard herself saying as if from afar, a polite word of thanks to the wonderful mimic. The silence that followed was dark and oppressive; they could not bear it very long and soon gay words about summer weather and picnics were flying back and forth. But Beatrice soon arose and went back to her room, where she sank wearily into her armchair and then fell into a sleep from which she awoke hardly an hour later as if from an abysmally deep night. When she walked later in the garden, in the cool of evening, the young people had gone away. They came back soon without Rudi Beratoner, whom they took elaborate pains not to mention further, and it was deeply consoling to Beatrice to see how her son and lover tried with unusual consideration and delicacy to wipe away the distressing impression of the afternoon.

And now, in the quiet solitude of twilight, when Beatrice tried to recall the real voice of her husband, she could not do it. It was always the voice of that unwelcome guest that she heard, and she realized more deeply than ever what a crime she had committed against the dead man, worse than any that he could have committed during his life-time against her, more cowardly and inexpiable than unfaithfulness and betrayal. He was rotting deep in the ground and his widow allowed stupid boys to make fun of him, of that wonderful man who had loved her — her alone, in spite of everything that had happened, just as she had loved no other but him, and would never love any other. Now she knew it for the first time — since she had a lover. A lover! Oh, if he would never come back, that lover of hers — if he would only go away forever out of her sight and out of her blood, and if she could live again in her villa with Hugo in the quiet peace of summer, as before! As before? And if Fritz were no longer there, would she have her son back. Did she still have the right to expect it? Had she troubled much about him recently? Had she not been much happier that he went his own way? And she remembered how, recently, when she had been walking in the wood with the Arbesbachers, she had seen her son, hardly a hundred steps away, together with Fortunata, Wilhelmine Fallehn, and a strange man; and she had hardly been ashamed, only had talked more eagerly with her friends so that they might not notice Hugo. And in the evening of the same day, yesterday — yes, certainly it was only yesterday — how slowly time went by — she had met Fräulein Fallehn and that strange man, who, with his black shiny hair, his sparkling white teeth, his moustache cut English fashion, his pongee silk suit, and his red silk tie, looked like a circus-rider, a swindler, or a Mexican millionaire. When Wilhelmine nodded in greeting with her never-changing deep solemnity, he had taken off his hat, bared his white teeth, and looked at Beatrice with an insolent smile that made her blush even in recollection. What a pair they were! She believed them capable of any vice, any crime. And these were the friends of Fortunata, these were people with whom her son now went walking and whose company he now frequented! Beatrice covered her face with her hands,

sighed and whispered to herself: “Away, away, away!” She said the word without really knowing what it meant. Gradually she began to realize its full meaning and thought that perhaps in it lay her and Hugo’s salvation. Yes, they must go away, both of them, mother and son, and as quickly as possible. She must take him with her — or he must take her. Both of them must leave this place before something would happen to them that could never be repaired, before she would lose all rights of motherhood, before her son’s youth would be completely ruined, before fate would fall crashing down upon them both. There was still time. No one knew of her own adventure, otherwise she would have noticed it in some way, at least in the actions of the architect. And the adventure of her son was doubtless also not yet known. And if they did know it, they would excuse it in so inexperienced a youth; and they could not even reproach a mother who had been so careless up to this time, if she should flee with him now, as if she had just discovered it. Therefore it was not too late. The difficulty lay elsewhere: to persuade Hugo to under take such a sudden journey. Beatrice could not guess how far the power of the Baroness extended over Hugo’s heart and mind. She knew nothing, nothing about him, since she had her own love affairs to worry over. But Hugo was clever, and he would not deceive himself into thinking that his adventure with Fortunata was to last forever, and so he could easily see that a few days more or less did not matter. And in her thoughts, she spoke to him: “We cannot go directly to Vienna. Oh, we can’t think of it, my child. We will go South. We have been planning that for a long time. To Venice, to Florence, to Rome. Just think, you will see the old palaces, and St. Peter’s! Hugo, let’s go to-morrow! You and I alone. Another journey like that one two years ago in the spring. Do you remember? Over Murrensteig by carriage to Mariazell. Wasn’t it beautiful? And this time it will be still more beautiful. And if it’ll be hard at first, oh, God, I’ll understand, and I’ll not ask you anything and you’ll not have to tell me anything. But seeing so much beauty and novelty, you’ll forget. You’ll forget very soon. Much sooner than you think—”

“And you, mother — you?” She heard Hugo’s voice saying it. She shuddered. And she dropped her hands from her eyes as if to assure herself that she was alone. Yes, she was alone, quite alone in the house in the half-darkened room; outside, the summer day breathed heavily and sultrily; no one would disturb her. She had plenty of quiet and time to plan what to say to her son. Of one thing she was certain: she need not fear a response such as she had imagined in her excitement: “And you, mother?” That he could not ask. For he knew nothing — he could know nothing. And he would never know. Even if some suggestive whisper should come to his ear, he would not believe it. He would never believe anything like it of his mother. On that score she could be quite at ease. And she saw herself wandering with him through some fantastic landscape that she remembered from a painting — a greyish-yellow road with a town all in blue and with many towers swimming in the distance. Then she saw themselves walking in a large square under arched passages — strange people met them and looked at her and her son. They looked at her meaningly with bold teethy smiles, and as if they thought: “Ah, she has brought a nice youth with her on her journey! She might be his mother.” What? Did the people take them for lovers? Well, why not? They could not know that the boy was her son, and they would know her for one of those over-ripe women who desire such young blood. And there they would be, walking around a strange city among strange people and he Would think of his beloved with the Pierrot face, and she, of her sweet blonde boy. She groaned aloud. She wrung her hands. Whither? Whither? All of a sudden, one of the love-words with which she had held him to her bosom last night slipped treacherously from her lips — the boy whom she would bid farewell forever and whom she would never — never see again. Yet, just once more, if he came back to-day. Or to-morrow morning. But to-night her door would be locked. It was over forever. And she would say at parting that she had loved him very much — with a love that he would never meet again. And with that proud feeling, he would realize all the more his gallant

duty to eternal silence. And he would understand that it must be thus, and he would kiss her hand once more and would go. Would go. And then what? Then what? And she lay there with parted lips, her arms outstretched, her body trembling, and she knew that if he would come at that moment into the door, young and full of longing, she would not be able to resist him and would again belong to him with all the ardour that was now awakened in her like something long forgotten, in fact, like something that she had never before known. And now she knew too, in simultaneous agony and ecstasy, that the youth to whom she had given herself would not be her last lover. Already hot curiosity raged within her: who would the next one be? Dr Bertram? She remembered an evening — was it three or eight days ago? — she did not know — time dragged so — went by so quickly — the hours melted into each other and meant nothing — it happened in Welponer's garden — Bertram had suddenly run up to her on a dark path, had drawn her to him, and embraced and kissed her. And even though she had angrily pushed him away, what did that matter to him, who in spite of that must Save felt the submissive pressure of her lips, so accustomed to kisses? That was why he had immediately become so quiet and patient, as if he well knew just where he stood, and she could read in his look: "Winter belongs to me, dear lady. We have been in agreement for a long time. We both know that death is bitter and virtue only an empty word, and that one should let nothing go by." But it was not Bertram who spoke to her. Suddenly, while she lay there with closed eyes, another face had pushed Bertram's out of the way, that of the circus-rider or gambler or Mexican who had recently looked at her so boldly, just as Bertram had done and every one else. They all had the same look — all — and that look always said and wished and knew the same thing; and if one gave in to one of them one was lost. They took the one who happened to please them, and threw her away again. Yes, if one let herself be taken and thrown away. But she was not of that class. No, it had not gone that far with her. Passing adventures were not her style. If she had been created for that, how could she take the affair with Fritz so much to heart? And if she suffered such pangs of remorse and fear, it was only because that which she had done was so much against her nature. She hardly understood that it all had happened. There was no other way to explain it, than that it had come over her like a disease in these unbearably hot summer days, and had left her defenceless and weak. And just as the disease had come, so it would leave her again. Soon, soon. She felt in all her pulses, all her senses, in her whole body, that she was not the same as she had been formerly. She could hardly collect her thoughts. How feverishly they ran through her mind! She did not know what she wanted, what she hoped for, what she regretted, hardly knew if she were happy or unhappy. It could only be a disease. There were women in whom such a condition lasted a long time, and would hardly ever improve; such a one was Fortunata and that marble-white Fräulein Fallehn. There were others again whom it invaded or attacked and left soon after. That was her case. Most certainly. How otherwise could she have lived all these years since Ferdinand had gone, as chaste as a young girl and without desire? It only came over her this summer. All the women looked differently this year; the girls too — their eyes were brighter and bolder, and their behaviour was lighter, more enticing and seductive. And one heard such stories! What was that one about the doctor's young wife, who went out on the lake evenings with an oarsman and did not come home till the next morning? And about the two young girls who lay naked on the meadow just as the little steam-boat went by, and suddenly, before anyone could recognize them, had disappeared into the forest? Really, it was in the air this year. The sun had unusual strength, and the waves of the lake caressed her body more tenderly than ever before. And when that secret curse was lifted, would she again be as she had been, and could she slip through the hot adventures of these days and nights as if through an easily forgotten dream? And if she felt it coming again as she had felt it coming on this time, far in advance, when longing began to rage in her blood with dangerous intensity, she would be able to choose a much better and cleaner salvation than this time — she would marry again as other women did when they felt

as she did. Then an ironic smile came to her lips, as if taken unawares. She thought of some one who had recently been there, one whom she credited with the most honourable intentions, the lawyer, Dr Teichmann. She saw him before her in a brand new green and brown sports suit, with a plaid tie, his green hat with the fur cockade placed dashingly on his head — in short in an outfit by which he openly wanted to show that he knew how to look very fetching, even though he, a very serious man under ordinary circumstances, placed no worth upon such superficialities. Then she saw him sitting at dinner on the veranda between her son and her lover, addressing now one, now the other, with the seriousness of a senior assistant master, and saw him in his ridiculous innocence which had tempted her to exchange hand-clasps playfully with her Fritz under the table. He had left the same evening, since he was to meet friends in Bozen, and although Beatrice had not invited him to remain, he seemed very much puffed up and full of hope on leaving, for in the gay mood of that summer day she had not deprived even him of encouraging and exciting looks. Now she regretted it as she regretted so much else; and her next conversation with him appeared all the more uncertain because in the complete relaxation of that hour, she was more painfully conscious of the gradual weakening of her will-power. With a similar feeling of shame, she recalled the feeling of helplessness that had at times come over her during her last talks with Director Welponer, and then it seemed to her that if she were to choose, she could sooner think of herself as the wife of the Director — yes she must admit that the notion did not lack charm for her. To-day she felt as if this man had interested her from earliest times. The things that the architect had told her about the grandiose speculations and battles of the Director, in which he had been victor over ministers and members of the court, were especially well calculated to arouse Beatrice's curiosity and admiration. Besides, Dr Teichmann, too, had called him a genius when speaking of him, and had compared him in the daring of his undertakings, which always meant everything to Teichmann, to a valiant cavalry-general. And so it flattered Beatrice a little that just this man seemed to want her, apart from the satisfaction that it would offer her of taking the husband away from the woman who had once robbed her of hers. "Has robbed me of mine?" she asked herself in confused surprise. "What is wrong with me? What am I thinking of? Do I believe it, then? It may not be true. Everything else, but not that. I should have noticed something of it. Noticed something? Why? Wasn't Ferdinand an actor, and a great one too? Why couldn't it have happened without my noticing it? I was so trusting, that it was not difficult to betray me. Not difficult — but that does not mean that it actually happened. Fritz is a gossip, a liar, and these rumours are false and stupid. And even though it did happen, it happened long ago. And Ferdinand is dead. And she who was once his love is an old woman. What does all the past mean to me? What is going on now between the Director and me is a new story, which has nothing to do with the past."

And she thought further, that in truth it wouldn't be so bad to retire some day into the noble villa with its great park. What wealth, what glamour! What an outlook for Hugo's future! Truly, he was no longer young, and that must be considered to some degree, especially when one was as pampered as she had been recently. Yes, during this very summer, during these last weeks, he seemed to be aging more rapidly than ever. Was not perhaps his love for her to blame? Well, what was the difference? There were others, younger ones, and he would be betrayed anyhow: it was evidently his lot. She laughed dryly: it sounded ugly and mean, and she jumped up as if out of a wild dream. "Where am I, where am I?" she asked herself. She wrung her hands entreatingly. "How deeply shall you let me sink? Is there no halting any more? What is it then that makes me so wretched and so contemptible? What makes me reach out into space, and to be no better than Fortunata and other women of her sort?" And suddenly, with a failing heart, she knew what made her so wretched: the foundation on which she had rested in certainty for years was trembling, and the Heavens were darkening over her: the only man she had ever loved, her Ferdinand, had been a liar. Yes — now she knew it. His whole

life with her had been fraud and hypocrisy: he had betrayed her with Frau Welponer and with other women, with actresses, and countesses, and prostitutes. And when, on sultry nights, the languid charm of propinquity had driven him into Beatrice's arms, then it was the worst and lowest of all his lies, for she knew that on her breast he had thought of the others, all the others, in lust and malice. But why did she know it all of a sudden? Why? Because she was no different, no better than he. Was it Ferdinand whom she held in her arms, the comedian with the red flower, who often enough came home from the public-house at three in the morning, smelling of wine, swaggering, and babbling empty and unclean things, the one who as a young man had subordinated his higher passions to the favour of an old widow, and who in gay company read tender little notes that love-sick fools had sent to his dressing-room? No, that one she had never loved. She would have fled from that one in the first month of her marriage. He whom she loved was not Ferdinand Heinold: he was Hamlet and Cyrano and King Richard, and this one and that one, heroes and scoundrels, conquerors and martyrs, the blessed and the damned. And he who with strange fire had lured her into the summer night out of the secret darkness of their chamber to unutterable ecstasy, was not really he, but some sort of spirit full of hidden power out of the mountains, whose part he was playing without knowing it — for he always played a part, because he could not live without a mask, because he was afraid to see his real features reflected in her eyes. And so she had always betrayed him just as he had betrayed her and had constantly lived a life lost from the beginning, a life of fantastically wild lust — except that no one could have suspected it, not even she herself. But now it was revealed. She was destined to sink lower and lower, and some day — who knew how soon — it would be clear to the whole world that all her bourgeois respectability was a lie, that she was no better than Fortunata, Wilhelmine Fallehn and all the others whom till to-day she had despised. And her son would know it too; and if he did not believe the affair with Fritz, he would believe a next one — would have to believe it — and suddenly she saw him vividly before her with eyes wide open and full of pain, his arms outstretched in repulsion; and when she wanted to come near him, he turned around in horror, and hurried away with the fleetness of a dream. And she groaned aloud, suddenly wide awake. To lose Hugo? Everything, but not that. Better to die than to have her son no more. To die — yes. For then she would have him again. Then he would come to his mother's grave and kneel down and deck it with flowers and fold his hands in prayer for her. With that thought an emotion crept into her heart that was sweet and at the same time repulsive, and falsely peaceful. Still, deep within her, she heard a murmur: "Have I the right to rest? Haven't I much more to think about? Certainly — to-morrow we shall start out on our journey. To-morrow — how much there is to do — so much — so much—"

In the quiet dusk that surrounded her, she felt that outside, the world, people, and the landscape had awakened from their afternoon drowsiness. All sorts of distant sounds, indefinite and confused, came to her ears through the closed blinds. And she knew that people were already wandering on the roads, were rowing on the lake, were playing tennis, and drinking coffee on the hotel terrace — yes, in her still half dreaming condition, she saw swarms of happy summer-resorters, like tiny puppets, but real as life, bobbing up and down before her. The ticking of her watch on the night table sounded too loud in her ears, and like a warning. Beatrice was curious to know how late it was, but she still lacked the strength to turn her head or even to turn on the light. Some new, nearer sound, evidently from the garden, had become gradually more audible. What could it be? The voices of men, without a doubt. So near? Voices in the garden? Hugo and Fritz? How was it possible that they should both have returned so soon? Well, it was already evening, and Fritz had evidently been drawn back by his love. No doubt they had first rung the bell, and she had not heard it because she was asleep. Then they must have climbed over the fence; naturally they could not suspect that the mistress of the house was at home. Now one of the two was laughing out there. What laugh was that? It was not Hugo's

laugh. But Fritz did not laugh like that either. Now the other was laughing. That was Fritz. Now again, the first one. That was not Hugo. He spoke. It was not Hugo's voice. Then Fritz was in the garden with someone else? They were quite near. It seemed as if both had sat down on the bench, on the white one under the window. And now she heard Fritz calling the other one by name. Rudi — Well, then, it was he who was sitting with Fritz under her window, But that was not so astonishing. Recently they had arranged in her presence that Rudi Beratoner should come back very soon. Perhaps he had been there earlier, had seen no one and then had met Fritz, whom love had brought back so soon from Ischl, at the railroad station or somewhere else. In any case, there was no reason why she should rack her brains about it. There they were, the two young men, sitting on the white bench under the window of the adjoining room. Now she must get up, dress, and go out into the garden. Why? Did she really have to go into the garden? Had she such a pressing desire to see Fritz again, or was she the least bit anxious to greet the shameless youth who recently had aped her dead husband's voice and facial expression with such disgraceful facility? Still there was nothing else for her to do, but to bid the young people good-evening. She couldn't keep so still for all the time that they remained out there gossiping about everything they pleased. That it could not be a very pure conversation, she could not doubt. Well, that did not concern her. They could say what they wished.

Beatrice had gotten up and was sitting on the edge of her bed. Then she heard a word with perfect clearness, the name of her son. Naturally, they were talking about Hugo, and what they were saying was not difficult to guess. Now they laughed again. But she couldn't understand the words. If she were very near the window, she might be able to understand the conversation, but perhaps it were better to forego that. She might experience some unpleasant surprises. In any case, it would be wisest to get ready as quickly as possible, and to go into the garden. But Beatrice was impelled to slip first very quietly to the closed blinds. She looked out through a small crack and could see nothing but a strip of green; then through another crack, a blue strip of sky. But now, she heard all the better what was being said on the bench. First, it was only the name of her Hugo that she could make out. Everything was so whispered and hushed, as if both of them had in mind the possibility of being overheard. Beatrice put her ear to the crack and smiled with a sigh. They were talking about school. Very clearly, she heard: "That horrid chap would have liked to flunk him." And then: "A mean dog." She slipped back, dressed quickly in a comfortable house gown; and then, driven by her uncontrollable curiosity, she went back to the window. And now she remarked that they were not talking any more about school. "A Baroness, is she?" That was Rudi Beratoner's voice. And now — pah — what a disgusting word— "He's with her all day long, — and to-day—" That was Fritz's voice. Against her will, she put her fingers to her ears, went away from the window and made up her mind to go immediately into the garden. But before she had reached the door, she was again driven to the window; she knelt down, put her ear to the crack, and looked out with wide-open eyes and burning cheeks. Rudi Beratoner was telling a story — at times he lowered his voice to a whisper, but from the single words that Beatrice gathered here and there, it became gradually dear to her what the affair was about. It was a love adventure of which Rudi was telling; Beatrice could make out French pet names which he pronounced in a sweet, gentle voice. Ah, evidently he was copying the manner of that person. He did that thing so remarkably well. Who slept in the adjoining room? His sister. Ah, it was the governess — More — more — how did it work? When the sister slept, the governess came to him. And then — and then —? Beatrice did not want to hear it, and yet she listened on and on, with growing eagerness. What words! What a tone! So this was how these boys spoke about their sweethearts! No, no, not all, and not about all. What a woman that must be! Surely she deserved it, that they should speak like that about her and not otherwise. But why did she deserve it? After all, what crime had she committed? It was only loathsome when they spoke about it. When Rudi Beratoner held her in his arms, he

was surely very tender and had pure loving words for her — as they all had at those moments. If only she could see Fritz's face! Oh, she could picture it. His cheeks would burn and his eyes would glow. Now there was silence for a while. Evidently the story was finished.

And suddenly she heard Fritz's voice. He was asking: "What, must you know everything so exactly?" A heavy feeling of envy stirred in Beatrice. "What, do you want an answer to that?" Yes, Rudi Beratoner was speaking. Well, then, speak louder at least. I want to hear what you are saying, you rogue, who have insulted my husband in his grave, and who now are betraying and reviling your beloved. Louder! Oh, God, it was loud enough! He was not saying anything now — He was asking a question — he wanted to know — if Fritz — had here in town — yes, you blackguard — run riot with your own profane words! It will not help you. You shall not learn anything. Fritz is hardly more than a boy, but he is nobler than you. He knows what he owes a respectable woman who has shown him her favour. Isn't that so, Fritz, my sweet Fritz? — You'll not say anything, will you?

What held her so firmly rooted to the floor, that she could not get up, hurry out, and put an end to the shameful conversation? But what would it have helped? Rudi Beratoner was not the man to be so easily satisfied. If he did not get his answer to-day at this time, then he would repeat his question on the following day. It was best to remain there and continue to listen — then one knew where one was, at least. Why so softly, Fritz? Speak out. Why should you not glorify your happiness? A respectable woman like myself — that's quite different from a governess. Beratoner spoke louder.

Beatrice heard him say quite distinctly: "Then you must be a regular idiot." Ah, let them take you for an idiot, Fritz. Accept the title. What, you do not believe him, you rascal? You want to worm his secret out of him at all costs? Have you any suspicions? Has anyone told you already? And again she heard Fritz's whispering, though it was quite impossible to understand the words. Now again, Beratoner's voice, deep and coarse: "What, a married woman? Go on — would such a one ever—" Will you not keep still, you wretch? She felt that never in her life had she hated anyone as she hated this youth who insulted her without knowing that it was she whom he was insulting. What, Fritz? For heaven's sake, louder! "She has already gone away." Ah, excellent, Fritz, you want to protect me from insulting suspicions. She listened. She drank in his words. "A villa near the lake — her husband is a lawyer." What a rogue! How deliciously he lied! She might really have enjoyed it, if not for the fear that agitated her. What? The husband was horribly jealous? He had threatened to kill her if he discovered anything? What? Till four o'clock this morning? Every night — every — night — Enough, enough, enough! Will you not be still? Aren't you ashamed? Why do you defile me? If your fine friend does not know that it is I of whom you are speaking, still you do know it. Why don't you lie instead? Enough, enough! And she wanted to stop her ears, but instead of doing so, she listened all the more attentively. Not a syllable escaped her any more. And in despair, she heard from the lips of her boy the detailed description of those holy nights that he spent in her arms, heard it in words that beat down upon her like the lashes of a whip, in expressions that she heard for the first time, but that were quickly understood, and that brought bloody shame to her brow. She knew that everything that Fritz was saying out there in the garden was nothing but the truth, and yet she felt that it had already ceased to be the truth, that this contemptible chatter had turned what had been his and her happiness into filth and lies. And to him, she had belonged! He was the first to whom she had given herself since she was free! Her teeth chattered, her cheeks and brow burned, her knees sank weakly to the floor. Suddenly she drew back — Rudi Beratoner wanted to see the house. And how did it happen that the people had already gone away in the finest part of the summer? "I don't believe a single word of your story. A lawyer's wife? Ridiculous! Shall I tell you who it is?" She listened with her ears, with her soul, with all her senses. But no word came. But without looking, she knew

that Beratoner was indicating the house with his eyes; he was pointing exactly to the window behind which she was kneeling.

And now came Fritz's answer: "What's the matter with you? You are quite crazy." Then the other one: "But you needn't say any more. I have already noticed it. Congratulations! Yes, not everyone has it so convenient. Yes — the — but il I wanted—" Beatrice could not hear more. She hardly knew how it happened. Perhaps it was the blood roaring in her brain that had drowned out Beratoner's last words. For a long time, the conversation outside was lost in this roaring, until she could again understand Fritz's words:

"Well, then, keep still. What if she's at home!" It's a little too late to think of that, my dear boy.

"Well, what if she is?" said Beratoner loudly and insolently. Then Fritz was whispering again in quick excitement, and suddenly Beatrice heard both of them getting up from the bench. For heaven's sake, what now? She threw herself flat on the floor, so that it would be impossible to espy her through the crack in the blind. Shadows passed before the blinds, steps crunched on the gravel path, a couple of muffled words, then a faint laugh farther away — and then nothing more.... She waited. Nothing stirred. Then she heard their voices dying away farther out in the garden — then nothing — for a long time — nothing, until she was certain they both were far away. They might have climbed over the fence as they had come, and might be telling each other their stories outside. Was there anything left to tell? Had Fritz forgotten anything? He would make up for it now. And in his delightful way, he would find a few more things to add in order to impress Rudi rightly. Why not? Yes, that was the gaiety of youth. One had his sister's governess, the other, the mother of his school friend, and the third, a Baroness, who formerly had been in the theatre. Yes, they had enough to say, these young men — they knew women and could rightly say that one was like the other.

And Beatrice wept silently to herself. She still lay outstretched on the floor. Why get up? Why get up now? When she would finally make up her mind to get up, it would be only to put an end to it all. Oh, to meet Fritz again, and the other one — She could spit in their faces, beat them with her fists. Wouldn't that be a solace and a joy? — to rush after them, to scream in their faces: "You boys, you wretches, aren't you ashamed, aren't you ashamed?" But at the same time, she knew that she would not do it. She felt that it was not worth the trouble, since she had decided and must remain decided to go on a path on which no scolding and no derision could follow her. Never, never, could she in her disgrace look anyone in the eyes again. She had but one more thing to do on this earth: to take leave of the one who was dear to her — her son! Of him alone! But naturally, without his noticing it. Only she would know that she was leaving him forever — that she was kissing the brow of her dear child for the last time — How strange it was to think such thoughts, lying stretched and motionless on the floor. If someone were to come into the room now, she would be taken for dead without fail. "Where will they find me?" she thought. "How shall I do it? How shall I arrange it, that I shall be lying here senseless, never to awaken again?"

A noise in the front room made her start. Hugo had come home. She heard him going down the hall, past her door, and opening his — and now there was silence again. He had returned. Now she was not alone any more. She got up slowly, with aching limbs. It was almost completely dark in the room and the air suddenly seemed unbearably sultry. She did not understand why she had been lying so long on the floor like that, and why she had not opened the blinds much sooner. She quickly did so now, and before her eyes spread the garden, the towering mountains, and the heavens darkening above her, and she felt as if she had not seen all this for many days and nights. The small world spread out in the evening light, so wonderful and peaceful that even Beatrice felt its calm. At the same time, however, she felt a fear creep gently into her mind. She must not let herself be deceived and confused by this peace. And she said to herself: "What I have heard, I have heard; what has happened, has happened. The quiet of this evening, the peace of this world, are not for me:

morning will come, the noises of the day will recommence; people will remain malicious and mean, and love, a filthy joke. And I am one who can never forget it, not in the daytime or in the night, not in solitude, or in new pleasure, not at home or abroad. And I have nothing more to do in this world than to place a farewell kiss on the brow of my beloved son, and go — What can he be doing there alone in his room?" From his open window a faint light shone out over the gravel and turf. Was he already in bed — weary after the joy and exertion of his trip? A shudder ran through her body, strangely composed of fear, horror, and longing. Yes, she longed for him, but for a different one than the one who lay in his room and who had the breath of Fortunata's body about him. She longed for the former Hugo, for the fresh, clean boy, who had once told her about the kiss of a little girl at the dance, for the Hugo who had driven with her one beautiful summer day over the country-side — and she wished for that time to return, when she herself was different — a mother, worthy of that son, and not a good-for-nothing woman, about whom spoiled boys dared gossip lewdly, as about any wanton. Ah, if there were only miracles! But there were none. Never could that hour be unmade when, with burning cheeks, on aching knees, with thirsty ears, she had listened to the story of her disgrace — and her happiness. Even in ten, in twenty, in fifty years, as an old man, Rudi Beratener would still remember this hour, when in his youth he had sat on a white bench in the garden of Frau Beatrice Heinold, and his school friend had told him how night after night, until early morning, he had lain in bed with her. She shuddered, she wrung her hands, she looked up to the heavens, whose clouds remained still as death and showed no surprise at her lonely agony. All sorts of noises from the street and lake came up to her in faint confusion; the mountains rose up darkly to the beckoning night, the yellow fields lay dully glowing in the twilight that was creeping in all around. How long would she remain here so motionlessly? What was she awaiting? Had she forgotten that Hugo might disappear out of the house just as he had come, to one who meant more to him than she? There was not much time to lose. Quickly she unbolted her door, went into the small salon, and stood before Hugo's room. For a moment she hesitated, listened, but heard nothing; then she opened the door hastily.

Hugo Was sitting on his divan and stared up at his mother with wide eyes, as if he had been frightened out of a restless sleep. Over his face played strange shadows from the uncertain light of the electric lamp, standing with its green shade on the table in the centre of the room. Beatrice remained for a moment at the door, Hugo threw his head back; it seemed as if he wanted to get up, but he remained seated, his arms extended, his hands resting flat on the divan. Beatrice felt the tension of this moment with heart-rending pain. An unequalled fear gripped her soul; and she said to herself, "He knows all.... What will happen?" she thought in the same breath. She went to him, forced herself to look happier, and asked: "Were you asleep, Hugo?"

"No, mother," he answered, "I was just lying down." She looked into a pale, miserable, childish face; unutterable sympathy, in which her own suffering was buried, arose within her; still trembling, she laid her hand on his tangled hair, then put her arm around him, sat down beside him, and gently began: "Well, my child—" Then she did not know what to say next. His face was violently distorted; she took his hands, he pressed hers distractedly, stroked her fingers and looked away; his smile was like a mask, his eyes reddened, his breast began to heave, and suddenly he slipped from the divan, lay at his mother's feet, put his head in her lap, and wept bitterly. Beatrice, shaken to the very depths, and yet happy in a way, for she felt that he had not become estranged from her, at first did not say a word, let him weep while she played quietly with his hair, and asked herself in terror:

"What can have happened?" And she comforted herself immediately: "Perhaps nothing unusual. Perhaps nothing except that his nerves are giving way." And she remembered very similar convulsive attacks that her

dead husband had suffered for seemingly negligible reasons — after the excitement of a great rôle, after an experience that had wounded his artistic vanity, or entirely without ground, at least without any that she could discover. And suddenly she began to wonder whether Ferdinand did not sometimes cry out on her lap the disappointments and griefs that he had suffered at the hands of some other woman. But why did that trouble her? What he had done, he had expiated, and all that was far away, so far away! To-day it was her son who wept in her lap, and she knew that he wept because of Fortunata. With what pain did that realisation grip her heart! Into what depths did her own experience sink when she found herself in the presence of her son's mental agony! Whither did her disgrace and pain and desire for death flee, before the burning wish to help her dearly beloved child, who wept in her lap? And in overflowing desire to aid him, she whispered: "Don't cry, my boy. Everything will be all right again." And when he shook his head, as if in denial, she repeated in a firmer tone: "It will be all right again, believe me." And she realised that she had directed these words of consolation not only to her son, but to herself. If it were in her power to help her son out of his despair, to fill him with new courage for life, that promise and strength must arise out of this knowledge alone, and even more from his gratitude and the feeling that he could belong again solely to her. And suddenly the picture rose up before her of that fantastic landscape in which she had dreamed she was walking with Hugo, and a thought full of promise came to her: "If I were to undertake the voyage with Hugo, that I had been planning before that dreadful hour — and if we were never to return home from that journey? — And if out there, in foreign lands, far from all whom we know, in a purer atmosphere, we were to begin a new, a better life?—"

Then he suddenly raised his head from her lap — his eyes wandered, his mouth was distorted, and he cried hoarsely: "No, no, it will never be all right again!" And he got up, looked absently at his mother, took a few steps towards the table as if he were seeking something there, then walked up and down the room a few times with sunken head, and finally remained standing motionless at the window, his eyes turned to the night outside. "Hugo," called his mother, who had followed him with her eyes, but did not feel capable of getting up from the divan. And again, imploringly: "Hugo, my boy!" Then he turned to her again with that forced smile that was more painful than his weeping. And tremblingly she asked again: "What has happened?"

"Nothing, mother," he answered in a sort of exaltation.

Now she stood up decidedly and went over to him. "Do you know why I came to you?" He merely looked at her. "Well, guess." He shook his head. "I wanted to ask you if you wouldn't like to go on a short trip."

"A trip," he repeated, seeming not to understand.

"Yes, Hugo, a trip — to Italy. We have time; school does not open for three weeks. We can be back long before that. Well, what do you think of it?"

"I don't know," he answered. She put her arms around his neck. How much like Ferdinand he looked! Once he had played the part of such a young boy and had looked exactly like him. And she joked: "Well, if you don't know, Hugo, I do know very well that we are to take a journey. Yes, my boy, there's no more to say about it. And now dry your eyes, cool your forehead, and we'll go out together."

"Go out?"

"Yes, certainly. This is Sunday and there is no supper at home. Besides, we are to meet the others down at the hotel. And the moonlight party on the lake, don't you know that it is to take place to-day too?"

"Won't you go alone, mother? I could come for you later."

An extravagant fear suddenly seized her. Did he want her out of the way? Why? For pity's sake! She forced back the frightful thought. And controlling herself, she said: "Aren't you hungry?"

"No," he answered.

"Neither am I. How would it be to go first for a little walk?"

“For a walk?”

“Yes, and then take the little detour to the hotel.”

He hesitated for a while. She stood there in strained expectation. Finally, he nodded. “Good, mother, get ready.”

“Oh, I’m ready, I only need to get my coat.” But she did not budge. He seemed not to notice this, went to his wash basin, poured water out of the pitcher into his hands, and cooled his forehead, eyes, and cheeks. Then he ran his comb quickly through his hair a few times. “Yes, make yourself handsome,” said Beatrice. And she remembered sadly how often she had said these words in long past times to Ferdinand when he was preparing to go out — God knew where —

Hugo took his hat and said smilingly: “I am ready, mother.”

She hurried into her room, got her coat, and didn’t fasten it until she was again in Hugo’s room. “Now, come,” she said.

As both were leaving the house, the maid was just returning from her Sunday holiday. But although she greeted her mistress obsequiously, Beatrice noticed from the almost imperceptible way in which that person lowered her eyes, that she knew all that had been happening during the past weeks in this house — Still she cared little about that. Everything was indifferent to her now, next to the feeling of happiness, the long lost feeling, that she had Hugo at her side.

They walked on through the meadows under the mute blue night of the sky, close to each other, and as rapidly as if they had a goal. At first they said nothing. But before they entered the darkness of the forest, Beatrice turned to her son and said: “Won’t you take my arm, Hugo?” Hugo took her arm and she felt better. They walked on in the heavy shadows of the trees, through whose thick branches the light from some villa lying in its depths broke from place to place. Beatrice let her hand slip over to Hugo’s, she fondled it, lifted it to her lips, and kissed it. He did not hinder her. No, he knew nothing about her. Or was he just making the best of it? Could he understand it, though she was his mother? Soon they arrived at a broad, greenish-blue strip of light that lay before the gate of Welponer’s villa. Now they could see each other face to face, but they looked ahead into the dark that immediately swallowed them up again. In this part of the forest, the darkness was so thick, that they had to slow their steps in order not to stumble. “Look out,” said Beatrice from time to time. Hugo only shook his head and they held firmly on to each other. After a while they reached a path that, as they well knew from happier hours, led down to the lake. They turned down this path and again came into a faintly lighted place where the trees stood back and left an open meadow over which hung the still, starless sky. From here, a weather-beaten wooden stairway, on one side of which an unsteady hand-railing offered some support, led down to the road below, that to the right lost itself in the night, but to the left led again to the town from which countless lights shone up to them. In mute agreement, Beatrice and Hugo turned their footsteps in this direction. And as if their walk together through the dark, though speechless, still brought her closer to him, Beatrice said in a light, almost joking tone: “I don’t like it when you cry, Hugo.” He did not answer, but looked absently away from her over the steel-grey lake that now seemed to extend like a narrow strip beneath the mountains. “Formerly,” began Beatrice again, and there was a sigh in her voice, “formerly you told me everything.” And while she said that, she felt again as if she were saying these word to Ferdinand and as if she would learn all the secrets of her dead husband, that he had so disgracefully kept from her, when he was yet on earth. “Am I becoming insane?” she thought. “Am I already mad?” And as if to recall herself to the present, she snatched Hugo’s arm with such force, that he drew back frightened. But she went on: “Wouldn’t it be easier for you, Hugo, if you were to tell me about it?” And she clung to him again. But while her own question continued to sound within her, she felt that it was not only the wish to relieve Hugo’s soul

that put this question into her mouth, but that a peculiar kind of curiosity had begun to rage in her, of which she was deeply ashamed in her heart. And Hugo, as if he guessed the secret disgrace of her question, answered nothing, and in fact, let his arm slip out of hers again, as if by accident. Disappointed and left alone, Beatrice walked beside him along the gloomy street. “What good am I on this earth,” she asked herself, “if I am not his mother? Is to-day the day to lose everything? Am I nothing more than a loose word in the mouths of spoiled boys? And that feeling of belonging to Hugo, of our common safety up there in the gracious dark of the forest, was all that only an illusion? Then life is no longer bearable, then everything is really over. But why does the thought frighten me? Was it not long ago decided? Did I not make up my mind earlier to put an end to it all? And did I not know that nothing else remained for me to do?” And trailing behind her, like jeering ghosts, hissed the terrible words that she heard to-day through the crack in the blind, and that meant her love and her shame, her happiness and her death. And for a moment, she thought in sisterly fashion of that other one, who once had run along the sea-shore pursued by evil spirits, weary with tormenting lust.

They were nearing the village. The light that now fell over the water just a few hundred feet away came from the terrace where the lively party were eating their evening meal and waiting for them. To enter once more into such a gay circle seemed madness to Beatrice; yes, entirely out of the realm of possibility. Why was she walking down this road? Why did she still remain at Hugo’s side? What cowardice had it been, that had made her wish to bid him farewell, him, to whom she was no more than a tiresome old woman who wanted to force herself in on his secrets? Then, suddenly, she saw his eyes again turned on her with a look of entreaty, that awakened new fears and hopes in her.

“Hugo,” she said.

And in tardy response to a question that she herself had already forgotten, he said: “It cannot be all right again. Telling will not help. It cannot.”

“But, Hugo,” she cried, as if newly emancipated, now that he had broken his silence. “Surely it will be all right; we are going away, Hugo, far away.”

“What good will that do us, mother?” Us? — Does that include me too? But isn’t it better that way? Aren’t we nearer to each other that way? He walked faster; she kept at his side — suddenly he stopped, looked out at the lake, and sighed deeply as if consolation and peace came to him from the solitude over the water. A few lighted row-boats were gliding out there. “Might that already be our party?” thought Beatrice casually. Certainly to-night they would have no moonlight. And suddenly an idea came to her: “How would it be, Hugo,” she said, “if we were to go out rowing alone?” He looked up at the sky, as if seeking the moon. Beatrice understood the look and said: “We don’t need the moon.”

“What are we going to do out there on the dark water?” he asked weakly. She took his head in her hands, looked into his eyes, and said: “You shall tell me about it. You shall tell me what has happened to you, as you always have done formerly.” She guessed that out in the friendly silence of the dark lake, his shyness, that now kept him from telling his mother what had happened, would leave him. Since she felt no resistance in his silence, she turned in decision towards the boathouse where her boat lay. The wooden door was not locked. She went into the dark boat-house with Hugo, unchained the boat hastily, as if there were no time to lose, then she swung over into the boat, and Hugo followed her. He took one of the oars, pushed away with it, and a second later, the open sky was over them. Now Hugo took the other oar and rowed along the shore, past the Lake Hotel, so near, that they could hear voices on the terrace. It seemed to Beatrice that she could hear the voice of the architect above the others. But she could not discern single figures or faces. How easy it was to flee from humanity! “What do I care what they are saying about me, what they think, or know —?

You simply push your boat away from the shore, you go so near to people that you can hear their voices,

and — it already makes no difference! When one is not coming back—" It sounded deep within her, and she trembled a little — she sat at the rudder and steered the boat towards the middle of the lake. The moon had not yet come up, but the water around them surrounded the boat with a dull circle of light, as if it had preserved the sunlight within itself. At times a ray came from the shore, in which Beatrice imagined she saw Hugo's face becoming steadily fresher and freer from care. When they were quite far out, Hugo let the oars drop, took off his coat, and opened his collar. "How much like his father he looks," thought Beatrice in painful surprise. "But I did not know him when he was so young. And how beautiful he is. His features are nobler than Ferdinand's — and yet I never knew his real features, nor his voice. They were always the voices and faces of others. Am I seeing him to-day for the first time?" And she shuddered violently. But Hugo's features, now that the boat was entirely in the black shadow of the mountains, began gradually to grow hazy. He began to row again, but very slowly, and they hardly moved at all. "Now is the time," she thought, but she did not know for a moment for what it was time, until suddenly, as if awakened out of a dream, the burning wish returned to her mind to know Hugo's experience. And she asked: "Well, then, Hugo, what has happened?" He merely shook his head. But with growing excitement, she felt that he was no longer so firm in his refusal to speak. "Just speak to me, Hugo," she said. "You can tell me everything. I already know so much. You can hardly imagine—" And as if she might banish the last trace of the spell, she whispered into the night: "Fortunata." Through Hugo's body went a shudder, so powerful that it seemed to break the boat in two. Beatrice asked further: "You were with her to-day — and is this how you come back? What did she do to you, Hugo?" He was silent, rowed on rhythmically, and gazed into space. Suddenly, Beatrice was enlightened. She pressed her hands to her forehead, as if she did not understand why she had not guessed it earlier, and bending closer to Hugo, she whispered quickly: "The distant captain was there, was he not? And he found you with her?"

Hugo looked up. "The captain?"

Now for the first time, she realised that the man whom she meant was not a captain. "I mean the Baron," she said. "Was he there? He found you? He insulted you? He beat you, Hugo?"

"No, mother, the one you mention was not there. I do not know him at all. I swear it to you, mother."

"Then, what is it?" asked Beatrice. Doesn't she love you any more? Is she tired of you? Did she laugh at you? Did she show you the door? Is that it, Hugo?"

"No, mother." And he was silent.

"Well, then, Hugo, what is it? Do tell me."

"Don't ask me, mother, don't ask me any more. It's too horrible."

Now her curiosity burst into flame. She felt that from somewhere in the confusion of this day so full of puzzles, so full of old and new questions, she must find the answer. She groped in the air with both hands, as if she wanted to gather something that was scattered there. She slipped down from the seat at the rudder, and sat at Hugo's feet. "Now, then, speak," she began. "You can tell me everything. You need not be shy. I understand everything. I am your mother, Hugo, and I am a woman. Can you realise that? You must not be afraid that you can wound me, or offend my modesty. I have experienced much these past days. I am still not an — old woman. I understand everything. Too much, my son — you must not think that we are so far apart, Hugo, and that there are things that you must not say to me." She felt in her confusion how she was giving herself up, how she was decoying him. "Oh, if you knew, Hugo, if you only knew—"

And the answer came: "I know, mother."...

Beatrice trembled. Yet she felt no shame, only a relieved consciousness of being nearer to him and belonging to him. She sat at his feet at the bottom of the boat and took his hands in hers. "Tell me," she

whispered.

And he spoke, but told her nothing. With heavy incoherent words he merely declared that he could never be seen among people again. What had happened to him to-day threw him forever out of the realm of the living.

"What has happened to you?"

"I was not in my right mind — I don't know what happened. They made me drunk."

"They made you drunk? Who, who? You were — not alone with Fortunata?" She remembered that she had seen him recently in the company of Wilhelmine Fallehn and the circus-rider. Then were they there? And with choking voice, she asked again, "What has happened?" But without Hugo's answer, she already knew. A picture painted itself before her eyes in the night, from which she wanted to turn in horror, but it followed her relentlessly and insolently behind her closed eyes. And in new, frightful suspicion she opened her eyes again, and turning them directly to Hugo sitting there in the darkness with tightly pressed lips, she asked: "Is it only since to-day that you know? Did they tell you over there?" He made no answer, but a shudder ran through' his body, so wild that it threw him weakly to the bottom of the boat beside Beatrice. She groaned aloud once in despair; and trembling forlornly, she grasped Hugo's feverishly shaking hands that he had stretched out to her. Now he left them in hers, and that did her good. She drew him nearer to her, pressed against him, and an agony of longing came from the depths of her soul and flowed mystically over to him. And both of them felt as if their boat, though it stood almost still, were moving on and on in growing speed. Whither was it taking them? Through what dream without aim? To what world without law? Did it ever have to go back to land? Dared it ever? Together they were bound on their everlasting journey; Heaven held no promise of morning for them in its clouds; and weakly succumbing to the anticipation of everlasting night, they gave each other their dying lips. The boat glided on, oarless to farther shores, and Beatrice felt that she was kissing one whom she had never known before, one who was her husband for the first time.

As she felt consciousness returning, she had enough strength of mind left to beware of a complete awakening. Holding both Hugo's hands tightly in hers, she stepped to the side of the boat. As it listed, Hugo's eyes opened in a look touched with a fear that bound him for the last time to the common lot of man. Beatrice drew her beloved, her son, her partner in death, to her breast. Understanding, forgiving, emancipated, he closed his eyes. But hers took in once more the grey bank rising up in the menacing dusk, and before the indifferent waves pressed between her eyes, her dying look drank in the shadows of the fading world.

Fräulein Else (1924)

Translated by Robert A. Simon, 1927

The final part of Schnitzler's 'Woman' trilogy, *Fräulein Else* was written as an interior monologue and first published in 1924. The protagonist is the daughter of a Viennese lawyer, who is spending a few days' vacation in the Trentino spa town of San Martino di Castrozza, financed by her aunt Emma. After finishing a game of tennis with Cissy and her cousin Paul, she receives a hurried letter from her mother, requesting that she ask the wealthy art dealer Dorsday for a desperately needed loan, as Else's father has embezzled funds belonging to his ward and is about to be arrested. Else approaches Dorsday and explains the difficult family situation to him.

He agrees to provide the necessary 30,000 guilders, but demands in return permission to view Else naked. Of course, she reacts with outrage to this request, but as the evening progresses, she recognises the dilemma she faces. Caught between unconditional loyalty to her father and a powerful longing for autonomy and self-determined womanhood, she cannot commit to either alternative. Rejecting the offer would mean abandoning her father to his fate; but accepting Dorsday's advances would amount to self-prostitution and thus relinquishing control over her own body.

Throughout this conflict, as Else constantly revisits her options, further aspects of her desires emerge, including a death wish and exhibitionistic urges, a need for love and a barely acknowledged striving for emancipation. In Else's pleasurable imagining of public exhibition and simultaneous shameful resistance to forced exposure before Dorsday, the recurring connection between male dominance over the feminine and a female striving for emancipation against it becomes strikingly apparent. Ultimately, however, it becomes clear that Else is unable to stand up to her father's demands and assert her own integrity.

Fräulein Else is a typical work of Viennese literary modernism, also known as aestheticism. It depicts the romantic and existential problems of the upper middle class. Schnitzler's work is permeated by the attempt to find adequate linguistic means of expression for the inner psychological processes of his characters, represented as actual real living beings. In *Fräulein Else*, this is achieved through the narrative form of the interior monologue. This gives the reader the impression that they are participating in the story, reacting directly to Else's thoughts from the protagonist's inner perspective. Schnitzler thus creates both identification with and distance from the heroine. The monologue-style reflection of inner reality is only occasionally interrupted by the direct depiction of external dialogues. In this way, Schnitzler succeeds in capturing a peculiar contrast between inner and outer reality.


DORI
Elisabeth
Bergner
in „Fräulein Else"
Nach der Novelle von Arthur Schnitzler
mit Else Heller · Grit Haid · Adele Sandrock
Albert Bassermann · Albert Steinrück · Jack Trevor
Regie: Paul Czinner

The 1929 German silent film adaptation of the novel, directed by Paul Czinner and starring Elisabeth Bergner, Albert Bassermann and Albert Steinrück.

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ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

FRÄULEIN ELSE

NOVELLE

1924

PAUL ZSOLNAY VERLAG
BERLIN · WIEN · LEIPZIG

The first edition's title page

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE



THE WORD "FILOU," which occurs frequently in this novel, is, originally, French argot, and cannot be translated literally. It has been carried into German, and it may mean anything from "flirt" to "roué," depending on the inflection of the voice. When the first syllable is accented, as in French, the word carries a playful implication; when the second is stressed, as in German, the expression is one of contempt. "Filou," as employed by Fraulein Else, may be approximated by the slang terms of "sheik" and "slicker," but as the word has no English equivalent, no attempt has been made to supply one.

Similarly, a few colloquialisms, such as "gnâdige Frau," and the greeting "Kuss die Hand" are also retained in the original.

FRÄULEIN ELSE



"So *you really don't want to play any more, Else?*"— "No, Paul, I really can't play any more. Adieu. — Auf Wiedersehen, gnadige Frau."— "*Oh, Else, why don't you call me Frau Cissy — or better yet, just plain Cissy?*"— "Auf Wiedersehen, Frau Cissy"— "*But tell me, why are you going already? Dinner won't be ready for at least two hours.*"— "Please go ahead, Frau Cissy, and finish at singles with Paul. Really, it's no fun playing with me today."— "*Leave her alone, dear lady. She's in one of her moods today. — As a matter of fact, Else, being moody is most becoming to you. — And as for the red sweater you're wearing — that's even more so.*"— "Well, Paul, I do hope you'll find me sweeter tempered in blue. Adieu."

That was rather a good exit. Here's hoping Paul and Cissy don't think me jealous. — I'll swear there's something between the two, but nothing in the world worries me less. — I think I'll turn around again and wave to them. Wave to them and smile. Now, don't I look gracious? — Oh, Heavens, they're playing again. As a matter of fact, I play a much better game than Cissy; and Paul really isn't exactly a champion. — But he *is* handsome with his open collar and that naughty look. If only he weren't so affected. Don't worry, Aunt Emma, so far as I am concerned....

What a perfectly wonderful evening! This should have been the right sort of weather for a trip to the Rosetta Camp. How gorgeously the Cimone towers up into the sky! — We should have started at five o'clock in the morning. Of course, I would have felt miserable, as usual, when we began — but that feeling soon wears off. — There's nothing more divine than wandering through the gray of the morning. — That one-eyed American at the Rosetta looked like a prize-fighter. Perhaps someone knocked his eye out in a fight. I'd rather like to be married in America, but not to an American; or perhaps it would be pleasant to marry an American, and then live in Europe. A villa on the Riviera with marble steps going into the sea. — How long is it since we were in Mentone? It must be seven or eight years. I was thirteen or fourteen at the time. Ah, yes, those were the days when we were in better circumstances. — It really was silly to postpone the outing. We'd have been back by now. — At four o'clock, as I was going out to play tennis, the special delivery letter about which Mother telegraphed hadn't arrived. Perhaps it's here now. I might just as well have played another set. — Why are those two young people greeting me? I don't know them. They've been living here at the hotel since yesterday and have been taking their meals at the left side in the dining room, where the Dutchmen used to sit. Did I nod back ungraciously or haughtily? I didn't mean to act that way. What did Fred call me on the way home from "Coriolanus"? High-spirited. No, disdainful. You're disdainful, not high-spirited, Else. — Those are nice words. He's always finding nice words. — Why am I walking so slowly? Can it be that I'm afraid of the news in Mother's letter? Well, I can't expect anything very pleasant. Why a special delivery letter? Perhaps she wants me home again. Ah me, what a life — in spite of the silk stockings and the silk sweater. I have three pair — I, the poor relative, invited out by her rich aunt. I'm sure she's already sorry she invited me. Dear Auntie, shall I put it in writing for you that I don't love Paul — even in my dreams? Oh, Lord, I don't dream about anybody. I'm not in love and I never have been. I wasn't even in love with Albert, though I may have imagined so for days and days. I think that I just can't fall in love with anyone. That's really remarkable, for I'm certainly a sensualist. But still, I'm proud and haughty. Thank Heaven for that! The first time I really was in love was when I was thirteen. I was in love with Van Dyck and still more in love with the Abbé des Grieux and also with Renard. And at the Worthersee when I was sixteen years old. — Well, no, that really wasn't anything. Oh, why am I reminiscing about all these things? I'm not writing my

memoirs. I don't even keep a diary like Bertha. Fred rather attracts me — nothing more. Perhaps, if he had a little more swank. There; I have it. I'm a snob. Father knows it and always laughs at me. Oh, dear Father, you worry me a great deal. I wonder whether he has ever deceived Mother. Has he? Of course, he has. Often. Mother's rather stupid. She really knows nothing about me at all. Neither do other people. As for Fred — well, yes, but only very slightly. — Perfectly heavenly evening. The hotel's all gayly bedecked. One gets the impression of many prosperous care-free people. Me, for instance. Ha ha. It's too bad, because I really was born for a care-free life. It might have been so wonderful. It's a pity. — Now there's a red glow over the Cimone. Paul might look at it and call it an Alpine glow. As a matter of fact, that's far from an Alpine glow. It's beautiful enough to make you weep. Oh, why does one ever have to return to the city!

"Good evening, Fräulein Else."— "Küss' die Hand, gnädige Frau."— "Back from tennis?" — She can see I'm back from tennis. Why does she ask me? "Yes, indeed, we played almost three hours. Are you taking a walk?"— "Yes, the usual evening constitutional down the lane. There's such a beautiful path between the two meadows, but during the daytime it's almost too sunny."— "Yes, the meadows here are gorgeous, especially so from my window by moonlight."— "Good evening, Fräulein Else"— "Küss' die Hand, gnädige Frau."— "Good evening, Herr von Dorsday."— "Back from tennis, Fräulein Else?"— "How observant you are, Herr von Dorsday."— "Please don't make fun of me, Else." — Why doesn't he call me "Fräulein Else"?— "Anyone who looks so beautiful with a tennis racket is justified in carrying it for decorative purposes." — The ass! I just won't answer that at all. "We were playing all afternoon. There were only three of us, Paul, Frau Mohr and myself."— "I was a ranking tennis player in my day."— "And aren't you any longer?"— "No, I'm too old for that now."— "Old? Why, in Marienlyst there was a Swede who was sixty-five years old. He played every evening from six to eight, and the year before that he played through a whole tournament."— "Well, I'm neither sixty-five as yet, thank Heaven, nor, unfortunately, a Swede." — Why unfortunately? I suppose he thinks that's funny. The best thing for me to do is to laugh politely and just leave. "Küss' die Hand, gnädige Frau. Adieu, Herr von Dorsday." What a deep bow he makes and what calves' eyes! I wonder whether I insulted him by referring to the sixty-five-year-old Swede. That doesn't matter. Frau Winawer must lead an unhappy life. She's fifty, at least. Those tear sacs of hers — as though she had wept a great deal in her day. How terrible it must be to be so old! Dorsday is walking over toward her. There he is walking along at her side. He still looks rather well with his grayish Van Dyke beard. But I can't feel at all attracted to him. He's only a social climber. What good does your first-class tailor do you, Herr von Dorsday? — Dorsday, rather. I'm sure your name used to be something else. — Here comes that sweet young girl of Cissy's with her Fräulein. "God bless you, Fritzi. Bon soir, mademoiselle. Vous allez bien?"—'

'*Merci, Mademoiselle. Et vous?*"— "Well, Fritzi, I see you're carrying an Alpine stick. Are you going to climb to the top of the Cimone?"— "*No, I'm not allowed to climb as high as that.*"— "Perhaps you'll be allowed to next year. Good-bye, Fritzi. A bientôt, Mademoiselle."— "*Bon soir, Mademoiselle.*"

A most attractive person. I wonder why she ever became a nurse girl — and why did she ever work for Cissy? It must be a mean life. Oh, Heavens, just to think that the same thing might happen to me! But of course it wouldn't, for I'm very accomplished. — Accomplished? — What a priceless evening! "The air is like champagne." That's what Dr. Waldberg said yesterday. And the day before yesterday somebody else said it. — I wonder why people will stay indoors in wonderful weather like this. I just can't understand it. Or is everyone waiting for a special delivery letter? The porter has just seen me. If there had been a special delivery letter he would have brought it to me immediately. Well, thank God, there's none there. I'll lie down a while before dinner. Why does Cissy say "dîner"? That's a stupid affectation. They're just like one another, Cissy and Paul. — Oh, I wish the letter were here already. It'll probably show up at "dîner," and if it doesn't show

up then I'll have a restless night. I slept so miserably last night. I'll take my veronal today. But I'll get used to that. No, my dear Fred, you mustn't worry about me. In my thoughts I'm always with you. — One ought to try everything, even hashish. I think that Ensign Brandel brought some with him from China. Is hashish drunk or smoked? It's supposed to give you marvelous visions. Brandel invited me to drink — or smoke — hashish with him. — Rather impertinent on his part — but he *is* handsome.

"Please, a letter for you, Fraulein — So it's the porter. — I'm turning toward him quite casually. Perhaps it's only a letter from Caroline, or from Bertha, or Fred or Miss Jackson. "Many thanks." It's a special delivery letter from Mother. Why didn't he tell me immediately that it was a special delivery letter? "I see it's a special delivery letter." I shan't open it until I get to my room and then I'll read it all by myself. — There goes the Marchesa. Doesn't the dusk make her look young! I'm sure she's forty-five. I wonder where I'll be at forty-five. Possibly dead. — I hope so. She's smiling at me just as pleasantly as always. I'll pass by, nodding a little, and show her that the smile of a Marchesa doesn't make too much of an impression on me. "Buona sera." — She bids me buona sera. Well, now I really must bow slightly. I wonder whether I bowed too deeply. She really is ever so much older. What a wonderful walk she has! I wonder if she's divorced. My walk is beautiful, too, but — I'm aware of it. That's the difference. — An Italian might be dangerous for me. It's a pity that the good-looking dark one with the Roman head left so soon. Paul said he looked like a Filou. My goodness, I've nothing against Filous! In fact, quite the opposite. — So, here I am at Number Seventy-seven. Seventy-seven really is a lucky number. Beautiful room. The pine wood is lovely. — Now we have a real Alpine glow. Even so, I shan't admit it to Paul. Paul's really rather shy. He's a doctor and a woman's specialist as well. Perhaps he's shy for that very reason. The day before yesterday when we were walking in the forest we were so far away from everyone that he might have been a bit more forward, only it would have done him no good. As for being forward, no one ever has tried it with me. Oh, possibly when we were swimming three years ago in the Wörthersee. But, *forward:* no, he was just plain indecent — handsome as he was.

He was a real Apollo Belvedere, though I didn't realize it at the time. But still I was only sixteen. There's my heavenly meadow. My —! Oh, I wish I could carry you back with me to Vienna. What beautiful mist! Is it really autumn? Of course it is. Today's the third of September and we are high up in the mountains.

Well now, Fräulein Else, will you finally make up your mind to read that letter? It doesn't necessarily concern Father. Couldn't it possibly contain some news about my brother? Perhaps he's engaged to one of his old flames. Perhaps to a chorus girl or a shop girl. Oh, no, he'd be too clever to do that. I really know nothing about him at all. When I was sixteen and he twenty-one he confided a great many of his affairs to me, especially as they concerned a certain Lotte; but all of a sudden he stopped. Lotte must have done something to him. And since then he's confided no more. — Well, here I've opened the letter without even noticing it. I'll sit down on the window sill and read it. I must take care that I don't fall out. According to advices from San Martino, a lamentable accident happened at the Hotel Fratazza. Fräulein Else T. a beautiful nineteen-year-old girl, daughter of the well-known lawyer... Of course, they'll say that I committed suicide over an unhappy love affair, or worse. Unhappy love affair? I should say not.

"My dear child". — I'll look at the end first. "So again, do not be angry with us, my dear, good child, and be a thousand times—" For Heaven's sake, they haven't killed themselves!! No; in that case there'd be a telegram from Rudi. "My dear child, you can believe me how sorry we are that into your pleasant weeks of vacation" — as though I didn't always have a vacation, unfortunately— "we must intrude with such unpleasant news." — Mother has a fearful style. "But after mature consideration nothing else remains for me. Briefly and to the point, Father's situation has become acute. I don't know what to think or do." — Why so

many words?— “It involves a comparatively ridiculous sum — thirty thousand gulden,” — ridiculous?— “which must be obtained in three days, else all is lost.” — For Heaven’s sake, what does that mean?— “Think of it, my dear child, the Baron Honing” — who, the district attorney?— “summoned Father to his office today. You know, of course, how the Baron respects Father. Yes, even loves him. A few years ago, when matters also hung by a hair, he spoke personally to the chief creditors and put affairs in shape at the last moment. But this time nothing can be done if the money is not forthcoming. Besides the fact that we shall be ruined, there will be a scandal, the like of which there has never been. Think of it. A lawyer, a famous lawyer — who — no, I cannot write it down. I fight constantly against tears. You know, child, for you are intelligent, we have been, God help us, several times in similar situations and the family has always helped us out. Last time, one hundred twenty thousand were involved. But that time Father had to sign an agreement that he never would approach our relatives again, especially Uncle Bernhard.” — Well, go on, go on. What’s the point? What can I do about it?— “The only one of whom I could think as a last resort would be Uncle Victor, but he, unfortunately, is on a journey to the North Cape or Scotland” — yes, he’s well off, the nasty fellow— “and he is absolutely unreachable, at least for the time being. Among Father’s colleagues, especially, Dr. Sch. who frequently has helped out Father” — good Lord, how do we stand there?— “is no longer to be thought of, now that he has married again.” — Well, what then? What do you want me to do?— “And now a letter has come, my dear child, in which you mention among others, Dorsday, who is also staying in Fratazza, and that seems like a stroke of Fate. You know how often Dorsday came to visit us in former years.” — Well, not so often. “It is sheer accident that we have seen him less frequently in the last two or three years; he is supposed to be deeply entangled — between you and me, nothing very fine.” — Why “between you and me”? — “At the Residenzklub Father plays whist with him every Thursday and in the past winter he saved him a pretty piece of money in an action against another art dealer. Furthermore, why should you not know it? He came to your father’s assistance before.” — I thought so. “That time only a mere bagatelle was involved — eight thousand gulden — but after all, thirty isn’t a great sum for Dorsday. So I wondered whether you could not do us a favor and speak to Dorsday.” — What?— “He always liked you particularly.” — Never noticed it. He stroked my cheeks when I was twelve or thirteen years old. “Quite a young lady already.”— “And as Father, luckily, has not approached him again since the eight thousand, he probably will also not decline this favor. He is supposed to have made eighty thousand a few days ago on a Rubens which he sold to America. Naturally, you may not mention this.” — Do you think I’m a goose, Mother?— “But otherwise you can talk to him quite frankly. You might also mention, if occasion arises, that Baron Honing has summoned Father, and that with thirty thousand the worst will be averted, not only for the time being, but, God willing, forever” — do you really believe that, Mother?— “for the Erbesheimer case, which seems to be brilliantly promising, will surely bring Father a hundred thousand. But, of course, he cannot demand anything from Erbesheimer in this instance. So I beg of you, my child, speak to Dorsday. I assure you there is no harm in it. Father could simply have telegraphed him — we discussed it seriously — but it is something quite different, my child, when one speaks face to face with a person. The money must be here on the fifth, at noon. Dr. F.” — Who is Dr. F.? Oh, yes, Fiala. “is implacable. Of course, there is also personal ill-feeling in the matter, but as, unfortunately, it concerns trust funds” — for Heaven’s sake, Father, what have you done?— “we can do nothing. And if the money is not in Fiala’s hands by twelve noon on the fifth, he will ask an order of arrest. Baron Honing will restrain him that long. So Dorsday would have to transfer the amount by telegraph through his bank to Dr. F. Then we are saved. Otherwise, God knows what will happen. Believe me, you will not reproach yourself in the least, my dear child. Father was doubtful at first. He even made efforts in two directions, but he came home quite in despair,” — can Father ever be in despair?— “perhaps not so much

because of the money, but because people have acted so shamefully toward him. One of them was once Father's best friend. You can imagine whom I mean." — I can imagine nothing at all. Father has had so many best friends and actually none at all. Possibly Warnsdorf?— "Father came home at one o'clock and now it is four o'clock in the morning. He is sleeping at last, thank God." — It might be best for him if he never woke up. "As soon as possible I shall post this letter myself, special delivery, so that you will receive it on the morning of the third." — How did Mother think that possible? She never knows her way about in these things. "So speak at once with Dorsday, I beseech you, and telegraph at once how it came out. Do not, for God's sake, let Aunt Emma notice anything. It is sad enough that in a case like this one cannot turn to one's only sister, but one might just as well speak to a stone. My dear, dear child, I am so sorry that you must live through such things in your youth, but believe me, Father is only in the smallest way at fault." — Who then, Mother?— "Now we hope to God that the Erbesheimer case will, in every respect, mark a change in our affairs. Only, we shall have to survive these few weeks. It would surely be irony if a catastrophe occurred over the thirty thousand gulden." — She doesn't mean seriously that Father will commit — But would not the other be even worse?— "Now I close, my child. I hope that in any circumstance" — in any circumstance?— "you will be able to remain in San Martino at least until the ninth or tenth. You must not return, in any case, for our sake. Remember me to your aunt — continue to be nice to her. So again, do not be angry with us, my dear good child, and be a thousand times" — Yes, I know that already.

So, I am to solicit Herr von Dorsday.... Idiotic. What does Mother take me for? Why didn't Father simply hoard a train and come up here immediately? — He would have arrived at the same time as the special delivery letter. But perhaps they might have caught him at the station — that would have been terrible. I'm sure no one will help us out with thirty thousand gulden. Always the same story for the last seven years. No, even longer than that. Who would believe it to look at me? No one would believe it to look either at Father or at me, and yet everybody knows it. It's a miracle that we still can keep our heads up. One becomes used to things quickly. As a matter of fact, we're living quite well. Mother's really an artist. It seems inconceivable that we had a dinner for fourteen people last New Year's — but the two pair of party gloves I had — oh, they were a sad affair. And when Rudi wanted three hundred gulden recently, Mother almost wept. But Father's always good-natured. Always? No, not always. When we heard "Figaro" recently, a look came over his face suddenly that really frightened me. — In a moment he seemed to become an altogether different man. — But after the opera we dined at the Grand Hotel and then he was just as brilliant as ever.

And now I'm holding the letter in my hand. The letter's altogether idiotic. I'm to speak to Dorsday. I'd just die of shame. — Shame? Why, what have I to be ashamed of? I'm not to blame. — If I only could speak to Aunt Emma. But that's nonsense. She probably hasn't as much money as all that to give away. And Uncle is nothing more than a miser. O God, why haven't I any money? Why haven't I ever earned anything? Why didn't I ever study? Oh, I've learned something. No one can say that I'm altogether unaccomplished. I play the piano; I can speak French, English and a little Italian; I've attended lectures. — Haha! And even if I had done more worth-while things than that, what good would they do me now? Certainly I couldn't have saved thirty thousand gulden by this time. —

The Alpine glow has died out. The evening's no longer wonderful. The surroundings seem sad. No, not the surroundings, but life itself is sad, and here I'm sitting quietly on the window sill, and Father is to be locked up. No, never, never! It mustn't be! I'll save him! Yes, Father, I'll save you! It's very simple. Just a few nonchalant words in my best manner. — Haha. I'll treat Herr Dorsday as if it were an honor for him to lend us money. And it is an honor. — Herr von Dorsday, possibly you have a few moments' time for me. I've just received a letter from Mother. She's temporarily embarrassed — rather, Father— "Why, certainly, my dear

lady, with the greatest of pleasure. How much is involved?" — I wish he didn't have this revolting effect on me. And the manner he has of looking at me! No, Herr Dorsday, I'm not taken in by your elegant manner and your monocle and your air of nobility. You might just as well be an old-clothes man as an art dealer. — But, Else, Else, what makes you say a thing like that? — Oh, I can permit myself a remark of this sort. Nobody notices it in me. I'm even a blonde, a strawberry blonde, and Rudi looks absolutely like an aristocrat. Of course, one can notice it easily in Mother, especially in her speech, but not at all in Father. Really they ought to notice it in me. More than that — let them notice it. I don't deny it and certainly Rudi doesn't. Quite the contrary. I wonder what Rudi would do if Father were put in jail. Would he shoot himself? What nonsense! Shooting and jail — all these things don't happen. They just appear in the newspapers. —

The air is like champagne. In an hour we'll have dinner— "dîner." I just can't bear Cissy. She doesn't care the least bit about her little girl. What shall I wear? The blue or the black one? Black seems to be the right color for today. Too décolleté? Toilette de circonstance, as they say in French novels. At all events, I must look seductive when I interview Dorsday. After the dîner, I'll act nonchalantly. He'll stare his eyes out. Odious fellow. I hate him. I hate all people. Must it be Dorsday? Is Dorsday really the only person in the whole world who has thirty thousand gulden? Suppose I tell Paul about it. If he told Aunt that he had gambling debts he'd certainly be able to get the money. — It's almost dark now. Night. Deathly night. Oh, I wish I were dead. — It just can't be true. Couldn't I go down right now and speak to Dorsday before dinner? Oh, how terrible! — Paul, if you give me thirty thousand you may have anything of me that your heart desires. No, that speech also comes out of a novel. The noble daughter sells herself for the sake of her beloved father and ends up by finding great joy in it. Oh, that's terrible. No, Paul, you can't have me even for thirty thousand. But for a million? — Or for a palace, or for a pearl necklace? If I marry some day I'll probably do it cheaper. Is it actually so bad? Fanny really sold herself. She told me that her husband makes her shudder. How would you like it, Father, if I auctioned myself off this evening just to save you from prison? It would make a sensation. —! I have fever, I'm sure of it. Perhaps it's the air, like champagne. — If Fred were only here he could advise me. I need no advice. There's no advice to give. I'll talk to Herr Dorsday of Eperies and I'll appeal to him, I, the haughty, the aristocrat, the Marchesa, the beggar-maid, the embezzler's daughter. How have I come to this? No one is a better climber than I am; no one has so much spunk. I'm a sporting girl. I should have been born in England, or else been a Countess.

There are my clothes hanging in the closet. I wonder whether the green felt has already been paid for, Mother. Only one installment, I think. I'll wear the black one. They all stared at me yesterday, even the pale little man with the golden pince-nez. I don't look exactly beautiful today but I do look interesting. I should have gone on the stage. Bertha already has had three lovers and no one thinks less of her for it. In Düsseldorf it was the manager. In Hamburg she lived with a married man at the Atlantic Hotel — rooms with bath. I'm sure she's proud of it. They're all stupid. I'll have a hundred lovers, a thousand; why not? Is the décolleté deep enough? If I were married it could be even deeper. — How fortunate, Herr von Dorsday, that I meet you here. I've just received a letter from Vienna... I'll take the letter with me in case of emergency. Shall I ring for the maid? No, I'll dress myself alone. I need no one to help me with the black gown. If I were rich I'd never travel without a personal maid.

I'd better turn on the light. It's getting cool, so I'll close the window. — It won't be necessary to pull down the shade. Nobody's standing over there on the hill with a telescope. — Herr von Dorsday, I've just received a letter. — Oh, perhaps it'll be better to do it all after dinner when both of us will be in a lighter mood. It might do me good to drink a glass of wine first. On the other hand, dinner would prove very much more appetizing if I finished the whole business beforehand. — All these wonderful dishes: Pudding à la merveille,

fromage et fruits divers. Yes, but what if Herr von Dorsday should say No? — And suppose he grew impertinent. Oh, no, nothing like that could happen. No one ever has been impertinent with me. Of course, Brandel, the young marine lieutenant, went a little too far, but he was so good-natured about it all. — I am getting thin again. That's becoming to me. — Darkness is peering in again — peering in like a ghost — like a hundred ghosts. Ghosts are rising up out of the meadow. How far away is Vienna? How long ago did I leave it? Oh, I feel so all alone! When will I marry? Who would marry the daughter of an embezzler? — Herr von Dorsday, I've just received a letter. "Oh, Fräulein Else, pray don't waste your breath talking to me about it. Just yesterday I sold a Rembrandt. Pray, Fräulein Else, don't shame me by mentioning it." And now he's tearing a page out of his check book and signing it with his golden fountain pen; and tomorrow morning I'll take the train to Vienna. Oh, yes, I'll do that in any case, check or no check. I can't stay here any longer. I can't, and I won't. I'm living here as a smart, elegant young woman, while Father is back there in Vienna with one foot in the grave — or rather in jail. — Well, so this is the last pair of silk stockings. But nobody can notice the little rip under the knee. No one? Who can tell? Don't be frivolous, Else, — Bertha's nothing but a hussy. But is Christine even the least bit better? Her future husband has a pleasant prospect ahead of him. I'm sure Mother was always a faithful wife. But I'll never be faithful. I'm haughty, but I'll never be faithful. Filous attract me too much. I am sure that the Marchesa is in love with a Filou. If Fred knew me as I really am, his veneration for me would disappear at once. "Everything would have been possible for you, Fräulein. You could have been a pianist, or a bookkeeper, or an actress. There is no end of possibilities in you, but you have always been too well off." Too well off. Haha. Fred overestimates me. As a matter of fact, I've no talent at all. — Who knows, I might have gone as far by this time as Bertha, but I lack energy. A young woman of good family. — Haha, good family! And the father embezzles trust funds. Why did you do this to me, Father? If only you had something to show for it — but gambling on the exchange! Is the effort worth it? And the thirty thousand won't help you, either. It might for three months. But in the end you'd be ruined. A year and a half ago you were almost in the same position as you are now. Help came then, but some time help won't come, and then what will happen to us? Rudi'll go to the Vanderhulst bank in Rotterdam, but what'll become of me? A wealthy husband. Oh, if I could only concentrate on that! Today I'm really beautiful. It's probably because I'm excited. For whom am I beautiful today? Was I happier while Fred was here? Oh, Fred isn't really the right man for me. He isn't a Filou, but I'd marry him if he had money. And then, no doubt, a Filou would come along — and the fun would begin. — Herr von Dorsday, wouldn't you like to be a Filou? — At a distance you sometimes look like one. Just like a dissipated vicomte, like a Don Juan — with your stupid monocle and your white flannel suit. But, really, you aren't a Filou at all. — Have I everything? Am I ready for dinner? — But what is there to do for a whole hour in case I don't meet Dorsday? What if he's walking with Frau Winawer? She really isn't unhappy at all. She doesn't need thirty thousand gulden. Well, then I'll sit down in the hall, look magnificent in a fauteuil, skim over the Illustrated News and the Vie Parisienne, cross my legs, — no one will notice the rip under the knee. Perhaps a millionaire has just arrived. — I'll take along the white shawl. It's becoming to me. I'll throw it carelessly over my gorgeous shoulders. For whom have I gorgeous shoulders? I could make a man happy, if the right man for me only existed. But I'll not have children. I'm not maternal. Marie Weil is maternal. So is Mother. Aunt Irene is maternal. I have a noble brow and a beautiful figure. "If I only were permitted to paint you as I want to, Fräulein Else." — Yes, that would please you. I don't even remember his name. I know that it wasn't Titian; therefore, it was just plain impertinence. — I've just received a letter, Herr von Dorsday. — I need a bit more powder on my throat and neck, a drop of Verveine in my handkerchief. So; I'll lock the cabinet, open the windows. Oh, it's too marvelous for tears! I'm nervous. Hasn't one the right to be nervous under circumstances like these? I'll put

the box with the veronal in it under my chemises. I need new chemises too. That'll be another nuisance. Oh, Lord!

It's uncanny, that enormous Cimone, as if it were ready to fall down on me. Not a star yet in the sky. The air is like champagne! And the perfume from the meadows! I'll live in the country. I'll marry a landowner and have children. Possibly the only man with whom I might have been happy was Dr. Froriep. What wonderful evenings those two were — first at Kniep and then at the Artists' Ball. Why did he disappear so suddenly? Perhaps because of Father. Yes; that's probably it. I'll blow a kiss up into the air before I go downstairs to that rabble. But to whom shall I send my greeting? I'm all alone. No one can imagine how terribly alone I am. Good evening, my lover! Who? Good evening, my bridegroom! Who? Good evening, my friend! Who? — Fred? — Hardly. I'll keep the window open even if it is growing cool. I'll turn on the light.

So. — Yes, that's right. Here's the letter. I'll take it with me to be prepared for any emergency. I'll keep the book there on the table. No matter what happens I'll read further tonight in "Notre Cœur." Good evening, lovely lady of the looking-glass. Think well of me. Farewell....

Well, why do I lock the door? Nothing will be stolen here. I wonder whether Cissy leaves her door open at night, or does she open it only after he knocks? I wonder whether it's quite safe. Oh, certainly it is. — The stairs are altogether empty. They always are at this time. My steps are echoing. I've been here three weeks now. I left Gmunden on the twelfth of August. Gmunden was a bore. I wonder where Father got the money to send Mother and me to the country. And even Rudi traveled for four weeks. God knows where he traveled. He didn't write twice during the whole time. I just can't understand our way of living. Mother no longer has any jewelry. — I wonder why Fred was in Gmunden for only two days. I'm sure he has a mistress there, though it doesn't seem possible. Nothing seems possible. He hasn't written to me for a whole week. He writes lovely letters. — Who's that sitting over there at the little table? No, it isn't Dorsday. Thank God for that. It would be impossible to talk to him now before dinner. — Why is the porter looking at me so curiously? I wonder whether he read Mother's special delivery letter. Am I going crazy? I must give him a tip soon again. — The blonde over there is already dressed for dinner. How can anybody be as fat as that? — I'll go out in front of the hotel and stroll up and down a bit, or shall I go into the music room? Isn't someone playing there? It sounds like a Beethoven Sonata. How can anyone play a Beethoven Sonata in this place? I've neglected my piano playing. As soon as I return to Vienna I'll practice regularly again. In fact, I'll start an entirely new life. We all must do that. Nothing like this must ever happen again. I'll talk to Father in all seriousness — if there's still time for it. There'll be time. There certainly will. Why haven't I done it already? Everything at home is settled in a jesting manner and yet none of us is really gay at heart. Each is really afraid of the other and each is all alone, by himself. Mother's alone just because she isn't bright enough and doesn't know anything about anyone. She knows nothing about me, nor about Rudi, nor about Father. But she doesn't know that she doesn't know and neither does Rudi. He's really a good, handsome fellow, but he gave promise for more when he was twenty-one. It'll do him good to go to Holland, but where shall I go? I'd like to travel and do just exactly as I please. If Father runs away to America I'll go with him. I feel all confused.... The porter probably thinks me insane — the way I sit here on the bench, staring into space. I'll light a cigarette. Where's my cigarette case? Upstairs. But where, upstairs? I put the veronal in with the underwear but where did I put the cigarette case? Here come Cissy and Paul. She's evidently decided she must get dressed for dinner, otherwise they would have kept on playing in the dark. — They don't see me. I wonder what he's saying to her. Why does she laugh so inanely? It would be amusing to write an anonymous letter to her husband in Vienna. Would I do such a thing? Never. But, who knows? They've just seen me. I'm bowing to them. She's piqued that I'm looking so well. She certainly seems embarrassed.

"Dressed for dinner so soon, Else?" — Why "dinner" this time, instead of "dîner"? She's never consistent. "As you notice, Frau Cissy."— "You really look ravishing, Else. It would give me the greatest pleasure to make love to you.". "Don't trouble to, Paul. I'd rather have a cigarette."— "With pleasure."— "Thank you. How did your singles match come out?"— "Frau Cissy beat me three times in succession."— "He was absent-minded. By the way, Else, do you know that the Crown Prince of Greece is expected here tomorrow?" — What's the Crown Prince of Greece to me? "Oh, really!" — Heavens! There's Dorsday with Frau Winawer. They're bowing to me. Now they're going on. I returned the bow too politely. Not as I usually do. Oh, what a strange person I am!— "Can't you light your cigarette, Else?"— "Oh, give me another match, please. Thank you."— "Your shawl is very pretty, Else. It looks perfectly marvelous with the black dress. And now I must change my clothes." — I'd rather she stayed. I'm afraid of Dorsday. "And I've ordered the hairdresser for seven o'clock. She's excellent — spends the winter in Milan. Well, adieu, Else, adieu, Paul."— "Küss' die Hand, gnädige Frau."— "Adieu, Frau Cissy." — She's gone. I'm glad that Paul, at least, is staying. "May I sit with you a moment, Else, or am I intruding on your reveries?":— "Why on my reveries? Perhaps on my realities." That really means nothing. I'd rather he left me. I must speak to Dorsday. There he is, still standing with the unhappy Frau Winawer. He's bored. I can see it. He'd like to come over to me. "Then there are realities on which I may not intrude?" — What is he saying? He can go to the devil! Why do I smile at him so coquettishly? I don't mean it for him at all. Dorsday's leering at me. Where am I? Where am I?— "What's the matter with you today, Else?"— "What do you think is the matter?"— "You're secretive, devilish, misleading."— "Don't talk nonsense, Paul."— "One could go mad looking at you." — What is he thinking of? What sort of nonsense is he talking? He's good-looking. The cigarette smoke catches in his hair. But I can't make use of him now. "You're looking past me in such a peculiar way. Why, Else?" — I won't answer. I can't make use of him now. I'll look as disagreeable as possible. No conversation now. "Your thoughts are somewhere else."— "That's quite possible." He's nothing to me. Does Dorsday know that I'm waiting for him? I don't see him but I know that he's looking at me. "Well then — goodbye, Else" — Thank God! He's kissing my hand. He's never done that. "Adieu, Paul." Where did I acquire that melting voice? He's leaving — the fraud! Probably he has to arrange details about tonight with Cissy. I wish him great joy. I'll draw the shawl about my shoulders and rise and go out in front of the hotel. Probably it'll be a trifle cool now. Too bad that my coat — ah, I hung it in the porter's office this morning. I can feel Dorsday's gaze on my back, piercing through the shawl. Frau Winawer is going up to her room now. How do I know that? Telepathy. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Porter."— "*Fräulein wishes her coat?*"— "Yes, please."— "*The evenings are beginning to be cool. It comes on suddenly here.*" —

"Thank you." Ought I really to go in front of the hotel? Surely. Why not? At least to the door. Now they're passing by, one after the other. The gentleman with the golden pince-nez; the tall, blond one with the green vest; they all look at me. The little Geneva girl is pretty. No; she's from Lausanne. It really isn't so cool.

"*Good evening, Fräulein Else*" — Heavens! It's Dorsday. I won't mention Father. Not a word. Only after dinner. Or, I'll go to Vienna tomorrow. I'll go to Dr. Fiala myself. Why didn't I think of that immediately? I'm turning about, looking as though I didn't know who was standing behind me. "Ah, Herr von Dorsday."— "*Would you still like to take a little stroll, Fräulein Else?*"— "Well, not exactly a stroll. Just a few turns before dinner."— "*We have almost half an hour*"— "Really." It really isn't so cool. The mountains are blue. It would be jolly if he suddenly proposed to me.

— "There surely isn't a prettier spot in the world than this."— "You find it so, Herr von Dorsday. But please don't tell me that the air is like champagne."— "No, Frâulein Else. I only say that when we reach two thousand meters. And here we are hardly sixteen hundred and fifty above sea level."— "Does that make such

a difference?"— "Certainly. Were you ever in the Engadin?"— "No, never. Is the air there really like champagne?"— "One might almost say so. But champagne is not my favorite beverage. I prefer this vicinity for its wonderful forests." How tiresome he is! Doesn't he realize it? He obviously doesn't know what to say to me? It would be simpler with a married woman. A slightly indecent remark and the conversation is well under way. "*Will you stay a while here in San Martino, Fräulein Else?*" Idiotic. Why do I look at him so coquettishly? He's already smiling knowingly. Oh, how stupid men are! "That depends partly on my aunt." That isn't really true. I could go alone to Vienna. "Probably until the tenth."— "*Your mother is still in Gmunden?*"— "No, Herr von Dorsday. She's been back in Vienna for three weeks. Father is also in Vienna. This year he's taken a vacation of less than a week. I believe the Erbesheimer case is making a lot of work for him."— "I *can imagine that. But your father is probably the only one who can save Erbesheimer. Success is already indicated by the fact that it has become a civil action.*" — That's good. That's good. "I'm pleased to hear that you have so favorable a premonition."— "*Premonition? How so?*"— "That Father is to win the case for Erbesheimer."— "*I shouldn't assert that too confidently.*" — How? Is he retreating? That won't do him any good. "Oh, I believe in premonitions and fancies. Think of it, Herr von Dorsday, just today I received a letter from home." That was not so good. He looks rather astonished. But go on. Don't hesitate. He's a good old friend of Father's. Go on. Go on. Now or never! "Herr von Dorsday, you just spoke so well of Father that it would be downright wrong if I weren't completely honest with you." What calves' eyes he is making at me! Oh, dear, he notices something. Go on. Go on. "For there was talk of you in that letter, Herr von Dorsday. It is, in fact, a letter from Mother."— "So."— "Really a very sad letter. You know our circumstances, Herr von Dorsday.", — For Heaven's sake, I really have tears in my voice. Go on. Go on. There's no retreat now. Thank God! "To be short and to the point, Herr von Dorsday, we are once more in — in the usual situation." — Now he'd like to disappear. "It involves — a small amount. Really only a bagatelle, Herr von Dorsday. And yet, so Mother writes, everything depends on it." I ramble on as stupidly as a cow. "*Please calm yourself, Fräulein Else.*" — He said that nicely. But he needn't pat my arm on that account.

— "*What, then, really is the trouble, Fräulein Else? What is in that sad letter from Mother?*"— "Herr von Dorsday, Father" — My knees are trembling. "Mother writes that Father"— "*But for goodness' sake, Else, what's wrong? Wouldn't you rather — here's a bench. May I put your coat about you? It's rather cool.*"— "Thanks, Herr von Dorsday. Oh, it's nothing. Nothing special." So — suddenly I'm sitting on the bench. Who's the lady coming this way? I don't know her at all. If only I didn't have to say more. How he stares at me! How could you ask this of me, Father? That wasn't right of you, Father. But now it's happened. I should have waited until after dinner. "*Well, Fräulein Else.*" — His monocle's dangling. That looks silly. Shall I answer him? I must. Quickly now, and have it over with. After all, what could happen to me? He's a friend of Father's. "Oh, Lord, Herr von Dorsday, after all, you're an old friend of our family." I said that very well.

"And probably you won't be surprised when I tell you that Father is once again in a very dangerous position." How remarkable my voice sounds! Is it I speaking? Am I perhaps dreaming? I certainly must have an entirely different voice than usual. "*It certainly does not surprise me completely. You are right about that, dear Fräulein Else — even though I regret it deeply.*" — Why do I look at him so pleadingly? Smile. Smile. It will work. "*I feel most friendly towards your Father — towards all of you.*" — He oughtn't to look at me that way. It's indecent. I'll speak differently and stop smiling. I must act more worldly. "Well, Herr von Dorsday, now you will have an opportunity to demonstrate your friendship for my father." Thank Heavens, I have my old voice again. "It seems, Herr von Dorsday, that among all our friends and relations — most of them are not yet back in Vienna — otherwise Mother probably wouldn't have hit on the idea. — The other day in a letter to Mother, I casually mentioned your presence here in San Martino — among others, of course."— "I *took it*

for granted, Fräulein Else, that I *wasn't the exclusive theme of your correspondence with Mother.*" — Why does he press his knee against mine? Oh, I'll put up with it! What's the difference, once you've sunk so low? — "The matter's simply this: It's Dr. Fiala who seems to be causing particular trouble for Father this time."— "*Oh, Dr. Fiala.*" — He evidently knows what kind of person Fiala is. "Yes, Dr. Fiala. And the sum involved is due on the fifth — that is, the day after tomorrow — at twelve noon — or rather, it must be in his hands, for if it isn't, Baron Honing — yes, think of it, the Baron summoned Father to him privately. He likes him so much." Oh, why am I speaking of Honing? That wasn't necessary. "*You mean, Else, that otherwise an arrest would be inevitable?*" — Why does he put it so severely? I won't answer.

I'll merely nod. "Hm. That is really — bad. That is truly very — this greatly gifted, brilliant man. — And how much is really involved, Fräulein Else?" — Why does he smile? He finds it "bad," and he smiles. What does his smile mean? Is the amount of no consequence to him? And if he says No! I'll do away with myself if he says No! So — I'm to name the sum. "What, Herr von Dorsday? Haven't I told you the amount? One million." Why did I say that? This is no time for joking! But then, when I tell him how much less it really is, he'll be pleased. How he'll open his eyes! Does he really think it possible that Father could be involved in a million— "Pardon me, Herr von Dorsday, for joking at a time like this. I can assure you that I'm not gay at heart." Yes, yes, press your knee against mine. You may take that liberty. "Of course, a million isn't involved. All in all, the amount runs to thirty thousand gulden, Herr von Dorsday, which must be in the hands of Dr. Fiala by noon of the day after tomorrow. Yes. Mother writes that Father made every possible effort, but, as I said, the relatives we sought were not in Vienna." — Oh, Lord, how I've debased myself! "Otherwise, Father naturally wouldn't have thought of turning to you, Herr von Dorsday. Much less, ask me —" Why is he silent? Why doesn't he say Yes? Where's the check book? And the fountain pen? For Heaven's sake, he isn't going to say No! Shall I go down on my knees before him? Oh, God! Oh, God!— "*On the fifth, you say, Fräulein Else?*"

— Thank God! At least he's saying something. "Yes indeed. At noon of the day after tomorrow, Herr von Dorsday. Therefore, it'll be necessary to — I don't believe it could be done so late by letter."— "Of course not, Fräulein Else. We'll have to telegraph."— "We" — that's good. That's very good. "Well, that would be the least of it. How much did you say, Else?" — He's heard me say it. Why does he torture me? "Thirty thousand, Herr von Dorsday. Really an absurdly small amount." Why did I say that? How stupid! But he's smiling. Stupid girl, he thinks. He's smiling quite amiably. Father is saved. He'd as soon lend me fifty thousand and then we could get ourselves all kinds of things. New chemises for me. How selfish I am! One gets that way. "Not quite so absurd, my dear child—" Why does he say "dear child"? Is it a good sign or not? " — as you imagine. Even thirty thousand gulden have to be earned."— "Pardon me, Herr von Dorsday. I didn't mean it that way. I thought only how sad it was that Father — because of such a small amount—" Oh, Lord, I'm bungling it again! "You can't imagine, Herr von Dorsday, even if you have some knowledge of our circumstances, how terrible it is for me, and more especially for Mother." — He's putting a foot on the bench. Is that supposed to be good form, or what?— "Oh, I can imagine it easily, dear Else." — How his voice sounds! Altogether different. Remarkable. "And I've often thought: a pity about this brilliant man" — Why does he say "a pity." Won't he give the money? No; he's merely generalizing. Why doesn't he say "Yes" once and for all — or does he take that for granted? How he stares at me! Why doesn't he say more? Oh, because the two Hungarian ladies are passing by. At least he's resumed a decent attitude now. The foot's no longer on the bench. The cravat's too bright for an elderly gentleman. Does his mistress select them for him? Nothing very fine, "between you and me," Mother writes. Thirty thousand gulden. But I'm smiling at him. Why am I smiling? Oh, I'm so cowardly!— "*If one really could take it for granted that something might be*

done with this amount. Bui — you're a clever creature, Else. What would thirty thousand gulden be? A drop in the bucket." — Oh, heavens! Doesn't he want to give the money? I mustn't look so frightened. Everything depends on this. Now I must say something intelligent and convincing. "Oh, no, Herr von Dorsday, this time it would be no mere drop in the bucket. The Erbesheimer case is at hand. Don't forget that, Herr von Dorsday, and today it's as good as won. And Father has other cases, too. Furthermore, I intend — you mustn't laugh, Herr von Dorsday — to talk very seriously to Father. He takes me seriously. I may say that if there's one person who can influence him, it is—"

"*You certainly are a delightful creature*, *Fräulein Else.*" — His voice has that ring again. How disagreeable it is when men begin to "ring" this way. I don't like it in Fred, either. "*A delightful creature, upon my word.*" — Why does he say "upon my word"? It's banal. It sounds like a small-town theatre. "*But gladly as I would share your optimism — once the cart has gone astray.*"— "Not this time, Herr von Dorsday. If I didn't believe completely in Father, if I weren't completely convinced that these thirty thousand gulden—" I don't know what to say now.

I can't exactly beg. He's thinking it over. Obviously. Perhaps he doesn't know Fiala's address. Nonsense. The situation is impossible. I sit here like a poor sinner. He stands before me and puts his monocle into his eye and says nothing. I'll leave now. That'll be best. I won't be treated this way. Father may kill himself. I'll kill myself, too. It's a shameless life. It would be best to jump from that cliff and have it over with. It would serve everyone right. I'll go. "Fräulein Else."— "Pardon me, Herr von Dorsday, for bothering you at all. Everything considered, I can readily understand your inclination to refuse." So. I'm through. "Stay, Fräulein Else" — Stay? Why should I stay? He'll give the money. Yes, of course. He must. But I won't sit down again. I'll remain standing as though I were going in half a second. I'm a little taller than he is. "You haven't waited for my answer, Else. Once before — pardon me, Else, for referring to it in this connection—" He needn't say "Else" so often— "I've been in a position to help your father out of a difficulty. To be sure, that was an — even more absurd sum than the present one — and I didn't flatter myself with the hope of ever seeing the money again. So there really seems to be no reason for refusing my assistance this time — and especially when a young girl like you, Else, comes in person as an intermediary." — What is he driving at? His voice "rings" no longer. Or it has a different "ring." How he stares at me! He'd better be careful!— "And so, Else, I'm prepared — Dr. Fiala shall have thirty thousand gulden at noon of the day after tomorrow, on one condition.". — He shouldn't say more. He's said quite enough. "Herr von Dorsday, I, I personally will guarantee that my father will return this sum as soon as he receives his fee from Erbesheimer. So far, Erbesheimer has paid nothing. Not even a retainer. Mother herself wrote that to me."— "Let it be, Else. One never should undertake a guarantee for another. Not even for one's self." — What does he want? His voice "rings" again. Never has anyone stared at me so! I suspect his intentions. He'd better be careful!— "Could I have thought it possible an hour ago that I'd ever be in a position to dictate terms! And now I'm doing it. Yes, Else, after all, I'm only human and it isn't my fault that you're so beautiful, Else." — What does he want? What does he want?— "Perhaps I might have asked of you today or tomorrow what I ask of you now. Even if you hadn't sought a million — I beg your pardon, thirty thousand — gulden from me. But really, if things had been otherwise, you hardly would have given me this opportunity to speak with you alone."— "Oh, I really have taken up too much of your time already, Herr von Dorsday." — That was well said. Fred would have been satisfied with it. What's this? Is he reaching for my hand? What's the matter with him?— "Haven't you been aware of it for a long time, Else?" — He should let go of my hand. Now, thank Heaven, he's let go of it. Not so close. Not so close. "You wouldn't be a woman, Else, if you didn't notice it. Je vous désire." — He didn't have to say that in French, the noble Vicomte. "Must I say more?"— "You've said quite enough, Herr

von Dorsday." I'm still standing here. Why? I'll leave. I'll leave without a word. "Else, Else." — Now he's next to me again. "Forgive me, Else. I too have only been joking, just as you did a little while ago, about the million. My demand, too, shall not be so exorbitant — as you may have feared. So that the lesser demand will, perhaps, be a pleasant surprise. Please stay, Else." — And I actually remain here! Why? Here we are, facing each other. Shouldn't I simply have slapped his face? Wouldn't there still be time for that now? The two Englishmen are passing. This would be the very minute. Right now. Why didn't I do it? I'm cowardly. I'm broken. I'm humiliated. What will he want now in place of the million? A kiss, perhaps. That might be considered. A million is to thirty thousand as — there are some funny comparisons. "If you really need a million some day, Else, you may be certain that YOU *see to it, although I'm not a rich man. But this time I shall be reasonable, as you are. And this time I wish nothing more, Else, than — to see you.*" — Is he crazy? He sees me. — Oh, he means it *that* way! Why don't I slap his face? The rotter! Have I turned red or pale? You want to see me naked? Many would like that! I'm beautiful when I'm naked. Why don't I slap his face? It's enormous. Why so close, you rotter? I don't want your breath on my cheeks. Why don't I just leave him? Are his eyes holding me? We glare at each other like deadly enemies. I'd like to call him a rotter to his face, but I can't. Or don't I want to?— "*You look at me as though I were crazy, Else. Perhaps* I *am slightly so. For there's a magic in you, Else, that you yourself can't realize. You must understand, Else, that my request implies no insult. Yes — request, I say. Though to you it may seem dangerously like coercion. But I'm no coercionist. I'm only a man who has had many experiences — among others, this: that everything in the world has its price, and that anyone who gives away his money when he might receive a return for it is a consummate fool. And — parting with what* I *wish to buy this time, Else, much as it is, will not make you poorer. And that the transaction will remain a secret between you and me, Else — that I swear to you by — by all the charms whose revelation will make me happy.*" — Where did he learn to talk like that? It sounds like a book. "*And I swear to you that I will never take any unfair advantage of the situation created by our agreement. I ask of you only to be allowed to stand for a quarter of an hour in contemplation of your beauty. My room is on the same floor as yours, Else. Number Sixty-five. Easy to remember. The Swedish tennis player you mentioned today — wasn't he just sixty-five years old?*"

—— He's crazy. Why do I let him go on? I'm paralyzed. "*But if for any reason you don't care to visit me in room Number Sixty-five, Else, then I suggest a little stroll after dinner. There's a clearing in the woods. I discovered it by chance the other day. Hardly five minutes from our hotel.*

—— *It will be a wonderful summer night, almost warm, and the starlight will clothe you divinely." — He speaks as he would to a slave. I feel like spitting in his face. "You need not answer immediately, Else. Think it over. After dinner, you may render your decision." — Why does he say "render"? What a stupid word: "render."*

— — "Think it over calmly. Perhaps you'll come to the conclusion that I'm not merely driving a bargain with you. " — What else, you whining rotter!— "Perhaps you'll suspect that a man is speaking to you, a man who is rather lonesome and not particularly happy, and who, perhaps, deserves a little sympathy." — Affected rotter! He speaks like a poor actor. His manicured fingers look like claws. No! No! I won't! Why don't I tell him so? Kill yourself, Father. What is he doing with my hand? My arm's quite limp. He draws my hand to his lips. Hot lips. Augh! My hand's cold. I'd like to knock his hat off. Ha, how funny that would be! Had your fill of kissing, you rotter? — The arc lamps in front of the hotel are already lighted. Two windows are open in the third story. The one in which the curtain is stirring is mine. Something's shining on the cabinet. There's nothing on it. Only a brass ornament. "*So, auf Wiedersehen, Else.*" — I don't answer. I stand here motionless. He looks into my eyes. My face is blank. He knows nothing. He doesn't know whether I'll come

or not.

Neither do I. I only know that everything's over. I'm half dead. There he goes. A little bent. Rotter! He senses that I'm staring after him. Whom is he greeting? Two ladies. He bows as if he were a Count. Paul ought to challenge him and shoot him. Or Rudi. What does he think anyway? Brazen fellow! Never, never! There's nothing left to do, Father. You'll have to kill yourself. — The couple obviously is returning from a trip. Both handsome, he and she. Have they time to change their clothes before dinner? They're surely on their honeymoon — or perhaps they aren't married at all. I'll never go on a honeymoon. Thirty thousand gulden. No, no, no. Aren't there thirty thousand gulden somewhere in the world? I'll go to see Fiala. Mercy, mercy, Dr. Fiala. With pleasure, my dear young lady. And there's my bedroom. — Please, Paul, do me a favor. Ask your Father for thirty thousand gulden. Tell him you have gambling debts. That otherwise you must shoot yourself. "Gladly, my dear cousin. My room is Number So-and-so, and I'll expect you at midnight." Oh, Herr von Dorsday, how modest you are. For the time being, at least. Now he's dressing, putting on a smoking jacket. Now we each go our own way. The meadow by moonlight or Room Number Sixty-five. Will he wear his smoking jacket when he's in the woods with me?

There's still time before dinner. A little walk. Let's think it over calmly. I'm a lonesome old man — ha, ha! Heavenly air, like champagne. It's no longer cool. — Thirty thousand... thirty thousand.... I must look very pretty in this wide landscape. Too bad there aren't more people in the clearing. Obviously I'm attractive to the gentleman out there near the edge of the wood. Oh, my dear sir, I'm even more beautiful naked, and the price is laughable. Thirty thousand gulden. Perhaps you'll bring your friends with you. Then it'll be cheaper for each one. Let's hope you have many handsome friends, handsomer and younger than Herr von Dorsday. Do you know Herr von Dorsday? He's a rotter. Vile rotter....

Oh, I must think it over.... A human life is at stake. Father's life. But no — he won't kill himself. He'd rather be imprisoned. Three years at hard labor — or five. He's been living in terror of this for five or ten years.... Trust funds.... And Mother, too. And even I. — For whom will I have to strip next time? Or shall we make permanent arrangements with Herr von Dorsday for simplicity's sake? His present mistress is nothing very fine. "Just between you and me." He'd certainly prefer me. I'm not at all sure that I'm so much finer. Don't take on airs, Fräulein Else. I could tell tales about you.... A certain dream, for instance, that you've had three times now — and that you haven't even told to your friend Bertha. And she's going through something. And what was that affair a little while ago in Gmunden? Six o'clock in the morning, on the balcony, my proud Fräulein Else. Perhaps you didn't notice the two young people in a boat who were staring at you. Of course they couldn't identify my face at that distance, but they couldn't help noticing that I was in negligee. And it made me happy. Oh, more than happy. It was intoxicating. I drew my hands across my hips and acted as though I didn't know that anyone saw me — and the boat didn't move from the spot. Yes — I'm like that. Indeed I am. I'm a hussy. They all know it. Even Paul knows it. Of course, he's a woman's specialist; and the marine lieutenant knew it too, and so did the painter. Only Fred doesn't know it, the stupid fellow. For he loves me. But I'd rather not be naked in front of him. Never, never! I wouldn't like it at all. I'd be ashamed. But for the Filou with the Roman head — how gladly! Even if I had to die the next minute. But I wouldn't have to die the next minute. One can go through all sorts of experiences. Bertha has gone through more.

No, no, I won't! I'll go to anyone else — but not to him. To Paul, for all I care. Or I'll pick somebody for myself this evening, at dinner. It's all the same. But I can't tell everyone that I want thirty thousand gulden in return. That would be like a woman from the Kärntnerstrasse. No; I won't sell myself. Never. I'll never sell myself. Yes; if once I find the right man, I'll give myself. But I'll not sell myself. I'll be a wanton, not a prostitute. You miscalculated, Herr von Dorsday. And so did Father. Yes, he miscalculated. He should have

foreseen it. He knows people. He knows Herr von Dorsday. He could have known that Herr von Dorsday wouldn't give something for nothing. — Otherwise, he could have telegraphed, or come here himself. But this way it was easier and safer, wasn't it, Father? If a man has a pretty daughter, why must he be marched off to prison? And Mother, stupid as ever, sits down and writes the letter. Father didn't trust himself to do it. If he had written, I should have noticed something peculiar immediately. But you won't succeed. No; you've counted too definitely on my childish affection, Father. You assumed too certainly that I'd rather undergo any indignity than let you suffer the consequences of your criminal frivolity. Certainly you're a genius. Herr von Dorsday says it. Everybody says it. But how does that help me? Fiala's a nobody, but he doesn't embezzle trust funds. Even Waldheim isn't to be mentioned in the same breath with you.... Who said that? Dr. Froriep. "Your father is a genius." And I've only heard him speak once! Last year at the assizes — for the first and last time. It was glorious. Tears ran down my cheeks. And the poor wretch he defended was acquitted. Perhaps he wasn't such a poor wretch. In any case, he only stole something. He didn't embezzle trust funds to play baccarat and speculate on the exchange. Now Father himself will be tried before the jury. It will be in all the papers. Second day of the trial, third day of the trial. The attorney for the defense arose to reply. Who will defend him? Not a genius this time. Nothing will help him. Unanimous verdict of guilty. Sentenced to five years. Stones, striped clothes, cropped hair. Visitors permitted once a month. I go there with Mother, third class. For we have no more money. No one lends us anything. A little home in Lerchenfelderstrasse, like the one in which I saw our seamstress ten years ago. We bring him something to eat. From where? For we have nothing ourselves. Uncle Victor will allow us an income. Three hundred gulden a month. Rudi will be in Holland with Vanderhulst — if they still think of him. A convict's children. Novel by Temme, in three volumes. Father receives us in the striped suit of the criminal. He doesn't look angry — merely sad. After all, he never can look angry.

— Else, if you had gotten me the money that time — that's what he'll think, but he'll say nothing. He won't have the heart to reproach me. He's endlessly kind, but he's careless. His weakness is the love for gambling. He can't help it. It's a sort of insanity. Perhaps they'll discharge him because he's insane. And he didn't give enough thought to the letter. Perhaps it never occurred to him that Dorsday would take advantage of the situation and demand such an indignity of me. He's a good friend of the family. Once before, he loaned Father eight thousand gulden. Why should one suspect a man like that? Father certainly tried everything else first. What he must have suffered when he had Mother write this letter! He went from Warsdorf to Burin, from Burin to Wertheimstein, and God knows to whom next. He certainly went to Uncle Carl, too; and they've all left him in his trouble. All the so-called friends. And now Dorsday is his hope, his last hope, and if the money doesn't arrive he'll kill himself. Of course he'll kill himself. He surely won't let them put him in prison. Examination, trial, assizes, jail, convict's clothes. No, no! When the summons comes, he'll shoot or hang himself. He'll hang himself from the window bars. They'll send word to us from the house across the way. The locksmith will have to open the door and I'll have been at fault. And now he's sitting with Mother smoking a Havana cigar in the very room in which he'll hang himself the day after tomorrow. Where does he keep on getting all the Havana cigars? I can hear him speaking as he quiets Mother. Depend on it, Dorsday will supply the money. Remember I saved him a great sum this winter through my intervention. And now comes the Erbesheimer case... — Surely. — I hear him speaking. Telepathy! Remarkable. I also see Fred this very moment. He's passing the casino in the city park with a girl. She's wearing a light blue waist and light shoes and she's a little hoarse. I'm sure of all of it. When I go to Vienna I'll ask Fred whether he was in the city park with his sweetheart on the third of September between seven and eight o'clock.

What next? What's to be done? It's almost completely dark. How nice and quiet. No one near or far.

They're already at dinner. Telepathy? No; that isn't telepathy. Because I heard the gong a little while ago. Where's Else? Paul will think. He'll notice it if I'm not there for the first course. They'll send up for me. What's wrong with Else? She's always so punctual. The two men at the window will think, Where's that pretty girl with the reddish blond hair today? And Herr von Dorsday will be frightened. He certainly is cowardly. Calm yourself, Herr von Dorsday, nothing will happen to you. I despise you far too much. If I wished it, you'd be a dead man tomorrow night. — I'm convinced that Paul would challenge you if I told him the story. I make you a present of your life, Herr von Dorsday.

How tremendously broad the meadow is, and how terribly dark the mountains. Hardly any stars are out. Yes, a few — three, four — there'll soon be more. And it's so quiet in the wood behind me. It's pleasant to sit here on the bench, at the edge of the wood. The hotel's so distant, so distant, and the lights are like the lights of fairyland. And what rotters live in it! Oh, no — people, poor people; I pity them all. I even pity the Marchesa — I don't know why — and Frau Winawer and the nurse of Cissy's little girl. She doesn't eat at the table d'hôte. She has her dinner earlier, with Fritzi. What's this about Else? asks Cissy. What? Isn't she in her room? They're all worried about me. I can feel they are. Only I don't worry about myself. Yes, here I am in Martino di Castrozza, sitting on a bench at the edge of the wood, and the air is like champagne, and it seems to me that I'm crying. Yes, and why am I crying?

There's no reason for crying. My nerves are getting the better of me. I must control myself. I mustn't let myself go to pieces this way. But crying isn't at all unpleasant. Crying's always good for me. When I visited our old French nurse in the hospital — the one who died later — I also cried. At Grandmother's funeral, when Bertha left for Nuremberg, and when Agatha's baby died, and when we saw "Camille" — I cried then, too. Who'll cry when I'm dead? Oh, how beautiful it would be to be dead! I lie on a bier in the salon, with candles burning. Long candles. Twelve long candles. The hearse is already downstairs. People are standing at the gate. How old was she? Only nineteen. Really only nineteen? — Think of it, her father in jail. Why did she kill herself? Because she loved a Filou in vain. But what are you talking about? She was to have had a child. No; she fell from the Cimone. It's supposed to have been an accident. Good day, Herr von Dorsday. You too pay your last respects to little Else. Little Else, the old woman says. — Why? Certainly; I must pay my last respects. Wasn't I the first one to disgrace her? Oh, it was worth the trouble, Frau Winawer. I've never seen such a beautiful body. It cost me only thirty million. A Rubens costs three times as much. She poisoned herself with hashish. She merely longed for beautiful visions, but she took too much and never awoke. Why is Herr von Dorsday wearing a red monocle? At whom is he waving that handkerchief? Mother comes down the steps and kisses his hand. Terrible, terrible. Now they whisper to each other. I can't understand a word, because I'm on a bier. The crown of violets about my brow came from Paul. The ribbons stream to the floor. No one trusts himself in the room. I'd rather get up and look out of the window. What a great, blue sea! A hundred ships with yellow sails. The waves glisten. So much sunlight. Regatta. The men are wearing life preservers. The ladies are in bathing suits. That's indecent. They think I'm naked. How stupid they are! I'm wearing deep mourning, because I'm dead. I'll prove it to you. I'll lay myself on the bier again. Where is it now? It's gone. They've taken it away. They've embezzled it. That's why Father's in jail. And they've pardoned him after three years. The jailers all were bribed by Fiala. Now I'll go to the cemetery on foot. That'll save Mother the funeral expenses. We must economize. I'm going so quickly that no one follows me. Oh, how fast I can go! They're all still standing in the streets, marveling. How dare they stare so at one who's dead? This is oppressive. I'd rather go across the field. It's all blue with forget-me-nots and violets. The marine officers stand with swords at presentarms. Good morning, gentlemen. Open the gate. Open the gate, Sir Matador. Don't you recognize me? I'm the girl that just died.... Therefore, you mustn't kiss my hand.

Where's my grave? Is that embezzled too? Thank God, it's not the cemetery at all. It's the park in Mentone. Father'll be glad that I'm not buried. I'm not afraid of snakes. If only my foot isn't bitten by one. Oh, dear!

What's happened? Where am I? Have I been asleep? Yes; I've been asleep. I must have been dreaming. My feet are so cold. My right foot's cold. Why? There's a little rip in the stocking, across the ankle. Why am I still sitting in the woods. They must have rung for dinner long ago. "Dîner."

Oh, Lord, where was I? I was so far away! What was I dreaming? I think I was dead. And I had no sorrows and didn't have to rack my brains. Thirty thousand, thirty thousand... I haven't got them yet. I must earn them first. And here I'm sitting alone on the edge of the wood. The lights from the hotel are shining all the way over here. I must return.

It's terrible that I must return. There's no more time to be lost. Herr von Dorsday waits for my decision. Decision. Decision! No. No, Herr von Dorsday, once for all, No. You've been joking, of course, Herr von Dorsday. Yes; I'll say that to him. Oh, that's excellent! Your joke wasn't very delicate, Herr von Dorsday, but I'll forgive you. I'll telegraph Father in the morning, Herr von Dorsday, that the money will be in Dr. Fiala's hands punctually. Wonderful. I'll say that to him. There'll be nothing left for him to do; he'll have to send the money. Have to? Does he have to? And why does he have to? And if he did, he'd even the score in some way. He'd arrange it so that the money arrived too late. Or he'd send the money and tell everybody that he'd had me. But he won't send the money at all. No, Fräulein Else, that wasn't our bargain. Telegraph your Father what you please, I'll not send the money. You shan't believe, Fraulein Else, that I allow myself to be outwitted by a mere girl — I, the Vicomte of Eperies.

I must walk carefully. The road's quite dark. Strangely enough, I feel better than I did. Nothing at all has changed and I feel better. What could I have been dreaming about? About a matador? What sort of matador was he? It's farther to the hotel than I thought. Surely they're still at dinner. I'll sit down quietly at the table. I'll tell them that I've had a sick headache and let them serve me later. Herr von Dorsday eventually will come to his senses and say that the whole affair was only a joke. Forgive me, Fräulein Else, forgive me for my bad joke. I've already telegraphed to my bank. But he won't say it. He hasn't telegraphed. Everything is as it was before. He's waiting. Herr von Dorsday is waiting. No! I don't want to see him. I can't see him any more. I don't want to see anyone any more. I don't want to return to the hotel; I don't want to return home; I don't want to return to Vienna; I don't want to go to anybody; to anyone at all; not to Father and not to Mother; not to Rudi and not to Fred; not to Bertha and not to Aunt Irene. She's still the best of them. She'd understand everything. But I'll have nothing more to do with her or with anybody else. If I were a magician, I'd be in some other part of the world. On some gorgeous ship in the Mediterranean, but not alone. With Paul, perhaps. Yes, I could imagine that very easily. Or I could be living in a villa by the sea, and we would be lying on the marble steps that lead into the water, and he'd be holding me close in his arms and biting my lips, as Albert did at the piano two years ago. The bounder! No. I'd like to lie alone by the sea on the marble steps and wait, and at last a man would come, or several men, and I'd choose one, and the others whom I'd reject would throw themselves despairingly into the sea. Or they'd have to be patient, until the next day. Oh, what a marvelous life that would be!

Why have I my glorious shoulders and my beautiful slender legs, and for what reason, after all, do I exist? And it would serve them right, all of them. They've brought me up only to sell myself one way or another. They wouldn't hear of acting. They laughed at me. It would have served them altogether right if last year I had married Wilomitzer, the stage director, who's almost fifty. If only they hadn't suggested things to me. Father, to be sure, seemed embarrassed. But Mother dropped some very plain hints.

How huge the hotel is! Like a monstrous, shining magic city. Everything's gigantic. The mountains, too.

Terrifyingly so. They've never been so black. The moon hasn't risen yet. It'll rise only for the performance, for the great performance on the meadow, when Herr von Dorsday bids his slave dance naked. What's Herr von Dorsday to me? Well, Mademoiselle Else, what pretentious nonsense you are talking! You were prepared to be the mistress of strange men, of one after the other. And the trifle which Herr von Dorsday asks horrifies you. You're prepared to sell yourself for a string of pearls, for beautiful clothes, for a villa by the sea, and the life of your father isn't worth as much as that? That would have been just the right start. That would have been the correct preface to everything else. You were guilty, I could say. You brought me to it. You're all to blame that I've become what I am. Not merely Father and Mother. Rudi's to blame, too, and Fred, and everybody; yes, everybody because no one has troubled himself about me. A little caress when you look pretty, a little anxiety when you have fever; they send you to school and you take lessons in piano and French at home; in the summer you go to the country and on your birthday you get presents; and they talk about all sorts of things at dinner. But what I feel — the things stirring and trembling in me — have you ever thought of that? Sometimes I could see something of the sort in Father's eyes, but it passed quickly. The next moment he was wrapped up again in his practice and his troubles and his speculations. — And probably some common woman. Furtively. "Nothing very fine, between you and me." And I'd be alone again. Well, what would you do, Father? What would you do if I weren't here?

I'm standing here. Yes, here I'm standing in front of the hotel. — It'll be terrible to go in and see all the people, Herr von Dorsday, my Aunt Cissy. How pleasant it was a little while ago on the bench — when I was already dead. Matador. — If only I could remember what it was. — It was a regatta. — Right. — And I was watching it from the window. But who was the matador? — Oh, if only I weren't so tired, so terribly tired. And now, I'm to sit up until midnight and then slip quietly into Herr von Dorsday's room? Perhaps I'll meet Cissy in the hall. Does she wear anything under her kimono when she goes to him? It's so difficult for a beginner! Oughtn't I to ask Cissy for advice? Of course, I mustn't tell her that it's Dorsday. I'd rather have her understand that I have a nightly rendezvous with one of the handsome young men in the hotel. For instance, the tall blond man with glowing eyes. But he's no longer here. He disappeared suddenly. I never even thought of him until this very minute. But unfortunately it's not the tall blond man with glowing eyes and it's not Paul. It's Herr von Dorsday. How shall I manage it? What shall I say to him? Just "Yes." And yet I can't visit Herr von Dorsday in his room. Of course he has all kinds of magnificent scent bottles on his washstand, and the room always smells of French perfume. No — not for anything in the world — I won't go to see him. It'll be better in the open. The sky's so high and the meadow's so wide. I mustn't think of Herr Dorsday at all. I mustn't even look at him. And if he dares to touch me, I'll kick him with my naked feet. Oh, if it only were somebody else. Anybody else. He could have everything he wanted tonight. But not Dorsday. Not Dorsday! Not Dorsday! How his eyes will stab and drill their way into me. He'll stand there with his monocle and leer. But no; he won't leer. He'll look dignified. Aristocratic. For he's used to such things. How many has he seen — so? A hundred, or a thousand — but was there one among them like me? No; certainly not. I'll tell him he's not the first to see me this way. I'll tell him I have a lover — but only after the thirty thousand gulden have been sent to Fiala. Then I'll tell him that he's a fool. That he could have had me, as well, for the same amount. — That I've already had ten lovers — twenty — a hundred. — But he won't believe that of me. — And if he believed it, how would it help me? — If only I could spoil his pleasure somehow. If only someone else were present. Why not? He didn't stipulate that he had to be alone with me. Oh, Herr von Dorsday, I'm so afraid of you. Won't you please do me the favor of bringing some mutual acquaintance with you? Oh, that's not at all contrary to our agreement, Herr von Dorsday. If I felt like it, I could invite the whole hotel and you'd still be bound to send the thirty thousand gulden. But I'll be content if

my Cousin Paul comes. Or would you prefer somebody else? The tall blond man unfortunately isn't here now. And the Filou with the Roman head, unfortunately, has gone, too. But I'll find another, easily. You fear a scandal. That's out of the question. Scandal has nothing to do with it. Nothing matters to one who has gone as far as I have. Today's just the beginning. Or, do you think perhaps that I'll go home from this adventure, a decent girl of good family? No — neither good family nor decent young girl. That matter would be settled, once for all. Hereafter, I'll stand on my own feet. I have beautiful legs, as you and the other participants in the festival will soon have occasion to observe. So the matter's arranged, Herr von Dorsday. At ten o'clock, while everybody's still in the salon, we'll wander in the moonlight across the meadow, through the woods to your famous clearing. At all events, you'll have to bring the telegram to the bank with you. For it's my privilege to demand a guarantee from a rascal like you. And at midnight, you may return home, and I'll stay with my cousin, or possibly with somebody else, in the moonlit meadow. You've no objection to that, Herr von Dorsday? You can't have. And if I should be found dead tomorrow morning, don't be surprised. In that event, Paul will send the telegram. I'll have seen to that. But don't think, for Heaven's sake, that you, you miserable scoundrel, have driven me to my death. I've known for a long time that I'd end up this way. Just ask my friend, Fred, if I haven't mentioned it to him time and again. Fred. I mean Herr Friedrich Wenkheim. Incidentally, the only decent person I ever knew in my life. The only one I could have loved — if he hadn't been such a decent person. Yes, I'm a very corrupt creature. I wasn't meant for domesticity and I haven't any talents. As it is, it might be best for our family if it died out. Some catastrophe will overtake Rudi. Some Dutch chorus girl will get him into debt and then he'll defraud Vanderhulst. It runs in the family. My father's youngest brother shot himself when he was fifteen years old. No one knows why. I didn't know him. Ask them to show you his photograph, Herr von Dorsday. We have it in an album.... I'm supposed to look like him. Nobody knows why he killed himself. And nobody will know why I did. In any case, not on account of you, Herr von Dorsday. I'll not do you that honor. At nineteen or twenty-one — it's all the same. Or shall I become a nurse girl or a telephone operator or marry Herr Wilomitzer or let you keep me? It's all equally disgusting, and I'll not go to the meadow with you at all. No; all of that's too tiring and too stupid and too disagreeable. When I'm dead, will you be so good as to send a few thousand gulden to Father, because it certainly would be sad if he were to be arrested on the very day that my body was taken to Vienna. But I'll leave a letter, with this testament: — Herr von Dorsday has the right to see my body, my beautiful, naked corpse. So you can't complain, Herr von Dorsday, that I made false promises. You're getting something for your money. Our contract doesn't specify that I must be alive when you see me. Oh, no. There's nothing to that effect. So — a view of my corpse I bequeath to the art dealer, Dorsday, and to Herr Fred Wenkheim I bequeath my diary up to my seventeenth year — that's as far as I wrote it — and to Cissy's Fräulein I bequeath the five twenty-franc pieces which I brought from Switzerland years ago. They're in the desk, next to the letters. And to Bertha I bequeath my black evening gown. And to Agatha my books. And to my Cousin Paul I bequeath a kiss on my pale lips. And to Cissy — I bequeath my tennis racket — because I'm generous. And I'm to be buried here in San Martino di Castrozza, in the pretty little cemetery. I don't want to go home. Even when I'm dead I don't want to return. And Father and Mother mustn't grieve. I'm better off than they are. And I forgive them. I'm not to be pitied. — Haha, what a funny will! Really, I'm touched to think that by this time tomorrow, while the rest are at dinner, I'll be dead. — Aunt Emma, of course, won't go down to dinner, and neither will Paul. They'll have their meals served in their rooms. I'm curious to know how Cissy will act. Only, I won't know, unfortunately. I'll know nothing more. Or perhaps you know everything so long as you're not buried. And, after all, I'm only making believe I'm dead. And if Herr von Dorsday approaches my corpse, I'll wake up and open my eyes and he'll be so frightened that he'll drop his monocle.

But, unfortunately, none of it's true. I'll be neither make-believe nor really dead. I won't kill myself at all. I'm too much of a coward. I may he a brave mountain-climber, but even so, I'm a coward. And perhaps I haven't even enough veronal. How many powders are needed? Six, I believe. But ten are more certain. I think I still have ten. Yes, that'll be enough.

I wonder how many times I've actually walked around the hotel. And what next? I'm standing in front of the door. Nobody's in the salon. Of course — they're all at dinner. The salon is seldom entirely deserted. There's a hat on the settee. A tourist's hat. Very smart. Pretty chamois tuft. There's an old gentleman in the fauteuil. Probably hasn't any appetite. Reading the paper. He's well off. He hasn't any worries. While he is reading his paper quietly, I must rack my brains to get thirty thousand gulden for Father. But no. I know how. After all, it's so terribly simple. What am I after? What am I doing here in the salon? Soon they'll all be coming in from dinner. What shall I do? Herr von Dorsday's certainly on pins and needles. Where is she, he's thinking. Has she killed herself, or is she hiring somebody to kill me, or is she stirring up her Cousin Paul against me? Have no fear, Herr von Dorsday, I'm not so dangerous. I'm a little hussy, nothing more. You'll be rewarded for your anxiety. Twelve o'clock, Room Sixty-five. It'll be too cool for me in the meadow and from your room, Herr von Dorsday, I'll go straight to my Cousin Paul. You certainly don't object to that, Herr von Dorsday? "*Else! Else!* How? What? That's Paul's voice. Is dinner already over?

"*Else!*"— "Oh, Paul. Why, what's the matter, Paul?" I'll act innocent. —

"*Where've you been hiding yourself, Else?*"— "Where do you suppose I've been hiding? I've been taking a walk."— "*Right now — during dinner?*"— "Well, why not? After all, it's the best time for it." I'm talking nonsense. "*Mother's been imagining all sorts of things. I went to your door. I knocked.*"— "Never heard you."— "*Please be serious, Else. How can you make us so uneasy? You could at least have informed Mother that you weren't coming down for dinner.*"— "You're quite right, Paul. But you've no idea what a headache I had." I said that quite disarmingly. Oh, what a hussy I am!— "*Is it somewhat better now?*"— "I couldn't really say that."

"*Before everything else, Mother—*"

"Stop, Paul; not yet. Make my apologies to my aunt. I want to go to my room for a few minutes to primp up. Then I'll come right down and have a little something to eat."— "*You're so pale, Else. Shall I send Mother up to you?*" —

"Don't make so much fuss about me, Paul, and don't look at me that way. Haven't you ever seen a woman with a headache? Of course I'll come down. In ten minutes, at the latest. Good-bye, Paul."— "Goodbye, Else." — Thank Heaven, he's gone. Stupid boy: — but dear. What does the porter want of me? What — a telegram? "Thank you. When did the message arrive?"— "Fifteen minutes ago, Fräulein." — Why does he look at me so — pityingly? For Heaven's sake, what can be in this message? I'll wait until I'm upstairs before opening it. Otherwise, I might faint. After all, Father has — if Father's dead, then everything's all right. Then I needn't go with Herr von Dorsday to the meadow.... Oh, what a wicked soul I am! Dear God, please let there be nothing bad in the message. Dear God, please let Father live. Have him arrested, for all I care, but not dead. If there's no bad news in it, I'll offer up a sacrifice. I'll become a nurse. I'll take a position in an office. Don't die, Father. I'll do everything you ask....

Thank Heaven, I'm upstairs. Turn on the light. Turn on the light. It's become cool. The window was open too long. Courage. Courage. Oh, perhaps I'll hear that matters have been settled. Perhaps Uncle Bernard is giving the money, and they're wiring me: "Don't ask Dorsday."

I'll know immediately. But if I look up at the ceiling I can't read the message. Trala, trala, courage. It's necessary. "Repeat urgently ask Dorsday. Sum not thirty but fifty. Otherwise everything useless. Address

remains Fiala." — But fifty. Otherwise everything useless. Trala, trala. Fifty. Address remains Fiala. Fifty. But surely fifty or thirty makes no difference one way or the other. Not even to Herr von Dorsday. The veronal is under the laundry — for any emergency. Why didn't I ask for fifty thousand in the first place? I thought of it! Otherwise everything useless. So — I must go downstairs at once. I can't stay here, sitting on the bed. A little mistake, Herr von Dorsday. Forgive me. Not thirty, but fifty. Otherwise everything useless. Address remains Fiala. "Do you take me for a fool, Fräulein Else?" Not at all, Herr Vicomte. Why should I? But for fifty, I'd certainly have to demand considerably more, Fräulein. Otherwise everything useless. Address remains Fiala. As you wish, Herr von Dorsday. Pray command me. But first of all, write the message to your bank. Otherwise, I have no guarantee. —

Yes, that's how I'll do it. I'll go to his room. Only after he's written out the message before my eyes — then I'll disrobe. I'll hold the message in my hand. Oh, how disgusting! And where shall I lay my clothes? No, no! No! I'll undress here and put on my big black coat, which will cover me completely. That'll be the most comfortable way. For both parties. Address remains Fiala. My teeth are chattering. The window's still open. Closed. In the clearing? I could have died there. Rotter! Fifty thousand. He can't say No. Room Number Sixty-five. But before that, I'll tell Paul to wait in his room for me. Then from Dorsday I'll go direct to Paul and tell him everything. And then Paul shall box his ears. Yes — this very evening. It'll be a rich program. And then comes the veronal. No — why the veronal? Why die? Not a bit of it. Be merry, be merry. Life's only beginning now. You'll have your share of it. You'll be proud of your little daughter. I'll be a wanton such as the world has never seen. Address remains Fiala. You shall have your fifty thousand gulden, Father, but with the next money I earn I'll buy myself nightgowns, with lace, quite transparent, and expensive silk stockings. One lives only once. Light. I'll light the lamp over the mirror. How beautiful my blondish red hair is, and my shoulders: and my eyes aren't bad, either. Oh, how big they are. It would be a pity.

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There's still time for veronal. — But I must go down. Way down. Herr von Dorsday is waiting and he doesn't even know that meanwhile it's become fifty thousand. Yes, I've gone up in price, Herr von Dorsday. I must show him the telegram. Otherwise he really won't believe me, and he'll think I'm making a profit out of the transaction. I'll send the telegram to his room and write something to go with it. To my great regret, it has become fifty thousand, Herr von Dorsday, but that's surely all the same to you. And I am convinced that your suggestions for payment were not meant seriously at all. For you are a Vicomte and a gentleman. Tomorrow morning you'll send the fifty thousand — my Father's life depends on it — to Fiala without delay. I count on it. "Why, of course, my dear young lady. I'll send a hundred thousand immediately to cover any further contingencies. I shan't ask a guarantee and I'll pledge myself furthermore from this day on to look after the welfare of your whole family, to pay the market debts of your father and to make good all embezzled trust funds." Address remains Fiala. Hahaha! Yes, just like the Vicomte of Eperies. But that's all nonsense. What can I do now? Something must be done. I must do something. I must do everything that Herr von Dorsday asks so that Father may have the money tomorrow — so that he won't be arrested; that he won't kill himself. And I'll do it, too. Yes, I'll do it. Although it's all for nothing. In half a year we'll all be just as far as we are today! In four weeks, in fact! — But then it will make no difference to me. I'll make this one sacrifice — and no more after that. Never, never, never again. Yes, I'll tell Father so as soon as I get to Vienna; then out of the house — anywhere. I'll consult Fred. He's the only one who really cares for me. But I'm not that far yet. I'm not in Vienna. I'm still in Martino di Castrozza. Nothing has happened yet. So now — how? What?

There's the telegram. What'll I do with the telegram? I knew what I was going to do with it. I must send it to him in his room. But what else? I must write him something to go with it. Yes — but what shall I write

him? Expect me at twelve. No, no, no. He'll not have that satisfaction. I won't, I won't, won't, won't. Thank God, I have the powders. That's the only way out. Where are they? For Heaven's sake, they haven't been stolen! No. Here they are. Right here in the box. Are all of them still there? Yes, here they are. One, two, three, four, five, six. I only want to look at them — the precious powders. Looking at them commits me to nothing. And I pour them into the glass, but that commits me to nothing. One, two — but I surely won't kill myself. I wouldn't think of it. Three, four, five, — even five won't really kill anybody. It would be terrible if I didn't have the veronal with me. Then I'd have to jump out of the window, and I wouldn't have the courage for that.

But veronal: — you go to sleep quietly and never wake up again. No trouble. No pain. You lie in bed. You drink it in one draught. Dream — and all is over. The day before yesterday I took a powder, and a few days ago I even took two. Ssh, don't tell anybody. Today it'll have to be a little more. It's only for emergencies. In case he revolts me too much. But why should he revolt me? If he touches me, I'll spit in his face. Very simple.

But how shall I get the letter to him? I can send the letter to Herr von Dorsday by the chambermaid. It would be best if I went downstairs and talked with him and showed him the telegram. In any event, I must go down. I can't stay up here in my room. I couldn't stand it for three hours — until the moment arrives. I must go down; too, for my aunt's sake. Ha, what's my aunt to me? What are the people to me? Look, my good people, there's the glass with veronal. So — now I take it up in my hand. Now I lift it up to my lips. Yes, at any moment I can be over there where there are no aunts and no Dorsday and no father who embezzles trust funds....

But I won't kill myself. That isn't at all necessary. And I won't visit Herr von Dorsday in his room. I wouldn't think of it. I'm blessed if for fifty thousand gulden I'll stand naked in front of an old roué just to save a good-for-nothing from jail. No, no — not in any case. How does Herr von Dorsday come into the picture? Must it be Herr von Dorsday? If one sees me, others shall see me. Yes! Wonderful idea! Everybody shall see me. The whole world shall see me — and then comes the veronal. No, not the veronal. What for? Next will come the villa with the marble steps and the handsome youths and freedom and the wide world. Good evening, Fräulein Else, I like you this way. Haha, down there you'll all think that I've gone mad. But I've never been sensible. For the first time in my life I'm really sensible. Everybody, all of them shall see me! — After that, there's no return. No return home to Father and Mother or uncles and aunts. Then I'll no longer be the Fräulein Else, who can be married off to any old Director Wilomitzer. I'll make fools of them all — especially that rotter Dorsday — and come into the world for a second time.... Otherwise everything is useless — address remains Fiala. Haha!

No more time to lose. Don't become cowardly again. Off with the dress. Who'll be the first? Will it be you, Cousin Paul? Your luck, that the Roman head isn't here any more. Oh, how beautiful I am! Bertha has a black silk chemise. Refined. I'll be much more refined. Wonderful life. Off with the stockings. They'd be indecent. Naked, altogether naked. How Cissy will envy me. And others, too. But they don't dare. They'd all like to — so much. Take me as an example, all of you. I, the virgin, I dare. I'll laugh myself to death over Dorsday. Here I am, Herr Dorsday. Quick — to the post-office. Fifty thousand. Isn't it worth that much?

Beautiful, I'm beautiful! Look at me, Night! Mountains, look at me! Sky, look at me — how beautiful I am. But you are all blind. What are you to me? The people downstairs have eyes. Shall I loose my hair? No. I'd look like a madwoman. But you shan't think me mad. You're only to think me shameless. Canaille. Where's the telegram? For Heaven's sake, where have I left the telegram? There it is lying peacefully beside the veronal. "Repeat urgently — fifty thousand — otherwise everything useless. Address remains Fiala." Yes,

that's the telegram. That's a piece of paper, and there are words on it. Despatched in Vienna at four-thirty. No; I'm not dreaming. It's all true, and at home they're all waiting for fifty thousand gulden, and Herr von Dorsday is waiting, too. Let him wait. There's plenty of time. Oh, how pleasant it is to walk up and down the room, naked. Am I really as beautiful as I look in that mirror? Oh, won't you come closer, pretty Fräulein? I want to kiss your blood-red lips. What a pity that the mirror comes between us. The cold mirror. How well we'd get on together. Isn't that so? We need nobody else. Perhaps there are no other people. There are telegrams and hotels and mountains and railroad stations and woods, but there are no people. We merely dream of them. Only Dr. Fiala exists — and his address. It always remains the same. Oh, I'm not at all mad. I'm only a little excited. That's quite natural when one is about to come into the world for a second time. For the Else that once existed is now dead. Yes, most certainly I'm dead. The veronal isn't necessary. Shouldn't I pour it out? The chambermaid might drink it by mistake. I'll leave a slip of paper there, and write on it: Poison: No — better: Medicine. So that nothing will happen to the chambermaid. I'm so noble!! So. Medicine, underscored twice, and three exclamation points. Now nothing can happen. And if I come upstairs and don't feel that I want to commit suicide, and only want to sleep, then I won't drink the whole glass — only a quarter of it, or perhaps even less. Very simple. Everything's prepared. It would be simplest to run down, as I am — across the hallways and the stairs. But no — I might be stopped before I got downstairs. And I must have assurance that Herr von Dorsday will be present. Otherwise, of course, he won't send the money — the reprobate. — But I still have to write to him. That's the most important of all. Oh, the back of the chair is cold, but agreeable. I'll leave my fountain pen to Fred, when I die. But just now I've something more important to do than die. "Most honored Herr Vicomte—" But be sensible, Else. No salutation. Neither most honored nor most despised. "Your condition, Herr von Dorsday, is fulfilled. — At the moment that you read these lines, Herr von Dorsday, your condition is fulfilled, although perhaps not in the manner you had anticipated."— "My, how well the girl writes," Father would say. "And so I cannot but hope that you will keep your part of the agreement and send the fifty thousand gulden by telegraph to the given address. Else." — No, not Else. No signature at all. So. My pretty yellow writing paper. A Christmas present. Too bad. So — and now the telegram and letter go into the envelope. "For Herr von Dorsday," Room Number Sixty-five? Why use the number? I'll just drop the letter at his door as I go by. But I needn't. I needn't do anything. If I felt like it, I could lie in bed now, and sleep, and do no more worrying about anything. Not about Herr von Dorsday, and not about Father. A striped convict's uniform really is very stylish, and many people have killed themselves. After all, everyone must die.

But you needn't do anything for the time being, Father. After all, you have a beautiful grown-up daughter, and address re-mains Fiala. I'll start a collection. I'll pass the plate. Why should Herr von Dorsday be the only one to contribute? That would be unfair. Everyone according to his means. How much will Paul drop on the plate? How much from the man with the pince-nez? But don't imagine that the fun will last. I'll cover myself again, run upstairs to my room, lock myself in, and, if I feel like it, drink the whole glass at one gulp. But I won't feel like it. It would be pure cowardice. They don't deserve such an honor, the rotters. Ashamed before you? Before whom am I to be ashamed? It's not at all necessary. Just let me look into your eyes, beautiful Else. What enormous eyes you have, when one comes near to you. I wish someone would kiss me on the eyes, on my blood-red mouth. My coat hardly covers my ankles. They'll notice that my feet are bare. What of it? They'll see more! But I'm not committed to it. I can go back now, before I've been downstairs. I can turn back on the first floor.

In fact, I needn't go down at all. But I will do it. I look forward to it. Haven't I longed for something like this all my life?

What am I waiting for? After all, I'm ready. The performance may begin. But don't forget the letter. Fred insists my handwriting's aristocratic. Auf Wiedersehen, Else. You're beautiful in that coat. Florentine ladies had themselves painted that way. Their portraits are hung in galleries and it's considered an honor. — Nothing's noticeable when I have the coat about me. Only the feet. My feet. I'll put on my black patent leather shoes. Then they'll think I'm wearing flesh-colored stockings. Done. I'll go through the halls and nobody'll suspect that there's nothing beneath the coat except me. Just me. And besides I can always return upstairs.... Who's playing piano so wonderfully down there? Chopin? — Herr von Dorsday must be rather nervous. Perhaps he's afraid of Paul. Patience — just patience — everything will take care of itself. I don't know anything yet, Herr von Dorsday. I'm in terrible suspense, myself. Put out the light. Oh, is my room in order? Farewell, veronal. Good-bye. Farewell, my dearly beloved looking-glass. — How you shine out in the darkness! Now I'm quite used to being naked under the coat. Rather pleasant. Who knows if there aren't many sitting this way in the hall with no one aware of it? I wonder whether many women don't go to theatre and sit in the loges this way — for fun or for entirely different reasons.

Shall I lock the door? Why? Nothing will be stolen here. And what if there were — I no longer need anything. Finished.... Where's Number Sixty-five? There's nobody in the hall. Everybody's still at dinner. Sixty-one.... Sixty-two.... Such huge mountain-boots in front of the door There are a pair of trousers hanging on the hook. How indecent. Sixty-four.... Sixty-five.... That's where he lives, the Vicomte....

I'll lean the letter against the door. He can't help seeing it there. Nobody'll steal it. So — there it is.... It doesn't matter.... I still can do as I please. I've merely made a fool of him.... If only I don't meet him on the steps now. Here he comes.... No, it isn't he!... This one is much handsomer than Herr von Dorsday. Very aristocratic with that small black moustache. When did he arrive? I might stage a little rehearsal — lift the coat a trifle. I'm very much tempted. Just look at me, my dear sir. You have no idea whom you're passing by. Too bad you're so occupied with climbing the stairs just now. Why don't you stay in the hall? You're missing something. Great performance. Why don't you stop me? My fate lies in your hands. If you greet me, I'll go back again. So, please greet me. After all, I'm looking at you so tenderly.... He won't greet me. He's gone. He's turning back! I feel it. Call me! Greet me! Save me! Perhaps, my dear sir, you will be responsible for my death. But you'll never realize it. Address remains Fiala....

Where am I? In the hall so soon? How did I get here? So few people and so many strangers. Or is my eyesight bad? Where's Dorsday? He's not here. Is this a stroke of fate? I'll go back. I'll write a different letter to Dorsday. I expect you in my room at midnight. Bring the message to the bank with you. No. He might regard it as a snare. It might be one, too. I could have Paul hidden with me, and he could force him to give up the despatch at the point of a revolver. Blackmail. A couple of criminals. Where's Dorsday? Dorsday, where are you? Has he perhaps killed himself in remorse over my death? He'll be in the card room. Of course. He'll be sitting at the card table. If he is, I'll signal to him from the doorway with my eyes. He'll get up at once. "Here I am, my dear young lady." His voice will have that strange sound to it. "Shall we take a little walk, Herr Dorsday?"

"As you please, Fräulein Else." We cross the virgin path to the woods. We're alone. I open my coat. The fifty thousand are due. The air's cold. I contract pneumonia and die.... Why are those two ladies looking at me? Do they notice something? Why am I here? Am I mad? I'll return to my room. I'll dress quickly. Put on the blue dress, the coat over it — but open, this time — and nobody'll believe that I had nothing on before.... I can't go back. I won't go back. Where's Paul? Where's Aunt Emma? Where's Cissy? Where are they all? No one will notice it.... It can't be noticed. Who's playing so beautifully? Chopin? No, Schumann.

I flit about in the hall, like a bat. Fifty thousand! Time flies. I must find this confounded Herr von Dorsday.

No, I must return to my room.... I'll drink some veronal. Only a few drops of it. Then I'll sleep well.... After work well done, sleep is welcome.... But the work hasn't been done.... If the waiter serves that black coffee to the old gentleman over there, everything will be all right. And if he takes it to the young bridal couple in the corner, everything's lost. What's that? What is he doing? He's bringing the coffee to the old gentleman. Triumph! Everything's all right. Ha, there go Cissy and Paul! They're strolling in front of the hotel. They're chatting quite gaily. He isn't so very wrought up over my headache. Hypocrite!... Cissy's figure isn't as good as mine. Of course, she's had a child... What are they talking about? If only I could hear them! Why should their conversation interest me? I might go out, bid them good evening and then go on, flit over the meadows, into the woods, step up, climb up, higher, higher, up to the Cimone, lie down, sleep, and freeze. Mysterious suicide of young Viennese society woman. Dressed only in her black evening coat, the beautiful young lady was found dead in an unfrequented part of the Cimone della Pala.... But perhaps they won't find me.... Or perhaps not until next year. Or even later. Rotted. A skeleton. Better to remain in these warm halls and not freeze. Well, Herr von Dorsday, where are you hiding? Am I obliged to wait? You must find me — not I you. I'll look in the card room. If he isn't there, he has forfeited his privilege and I'll write to him: — You were not to be found, Herr von Dorsday. You disappeared of your own volition. This does not release you of your obligation to forward the money at once. The money. What money? What's that to me? I don't care whether he sends it or not. I've no more sympathy for Father, not the least. I've sympathy for no one. Not even for myself. My heart is dead. I believe it has stopped beating. Perhaps I've drunk the veronal already.... Why does the Dutch family stare at me so? It's impossible to notice anything. The porter also regards me with suspicion. Has another message arrived? Eighty thousand? A hundred thousand? Address remains Fiala. If there were a message, he'd tell me. He looks at me most respectfully. He doesn't know that there's nothing under the coat. Nobody knows it. I'll return to my room. Back, back, back! If I tripped on the stairs — that would be pretty! Three years ago, on the Wörthersee, there was a young woman who went in swimming without clothes, but she left on the same afternoon. Mother says it was an opera singer from Berlin. Schumann? Yes — Carnival. He or she plays very well. The card room is at the right side. Last chance, Herr von Dorsday. If he's there, I'll summon him with my eyes and say to him, "I'll be with you at midnight, you rotter." — No, I'll not call him a rotter. But I'll call him that afterwards.... Somebody's following me. I won't look back. No, no. —
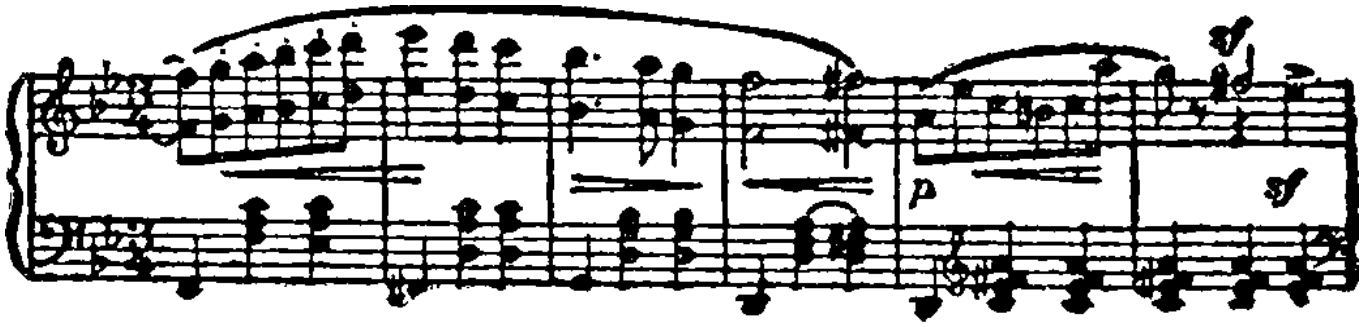
"*Else!*" — For Heaven's sake, my aunt! I'd better keep right on walking. "*Else!*" — I must turn around. There's no way out.

"Oh, good evening, Aunt."— "*Oh, Else, what's wrong with you? I was just about to go up to you. Paul told me — Oh, how you look!*"

"How do I look, Aunt? I'm feeling quite well. I just ate something." She notices something. "*Else — you have — you have no stockings on!*"— "What did you say? My soul, I have no stockings on! No —!"— "*Aren't you well, Else? Your eyes — you have temperature.*"— "Temperature? I think not. I've just had the worst headache of my life."— "*You must go to bed at once, child; you're deathly pale.*"— "That's on account of the bad light. Everybody looks pale in this hall." She looks at me so strangely. She can't notice anything? Now, I must keep my poise. All's over with Father if I lose my poise. I must say something. "Do you know, Aunt, what happened to me in Vienna a little while ago? I went out walking with one yellow shoe and one black one." Not a word of it's true. I must keep on talking. What'll I say now?

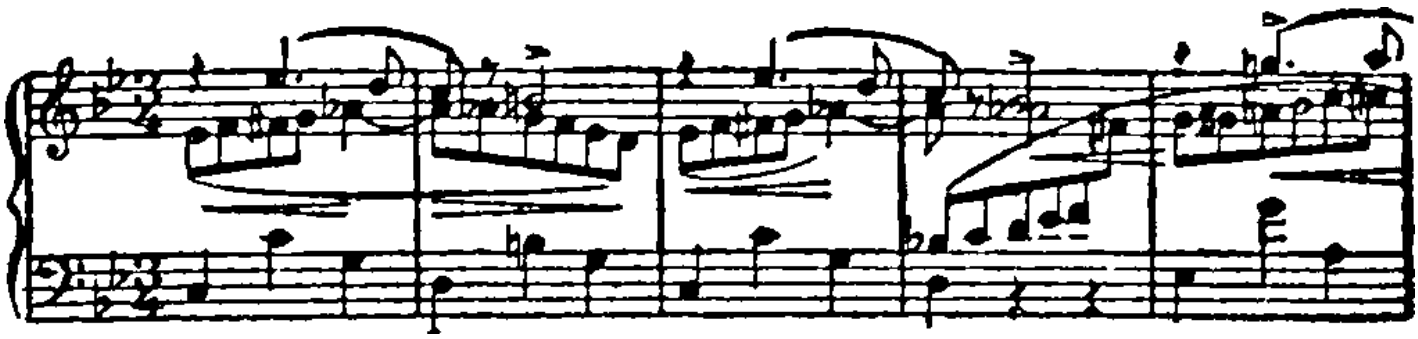
"Do you know, Aunt, I sometimes have attacks of absent-mindedness. Mother used to have them, too." Not a word of it's true. "*In any case, I'll send for the doctor.*"— "But please Aunt! There isn't one in the hotel. They'll have to call one from the next town. He certainly would laugh if he were called because I had

no stockings on. Haha." I oughtn't to laugh so loudly. My aunt's face is distorted with fear. The thing's too weird for her. Her eyes are popping out. "*Tell me, Else, have you by any chance seen Paul?*" — Ah, she's looking for help. Poise. Poise. Everything depends on it. "I think he's walking in front of the hotel with Cissy Mohr, if I'm not mistaken."— "*In front of the hotel? I'll call them both in. We'll all have a little tea. Yes?*"— "Gladly." What a stupid face she makes! I nod at her quite amiably and innocently. She's gone. Now I'll go to my room. No; what'll I do in my room? It's high time. High time. Fifty thousand. Fifty thousand. Why am I hurrying so? Slowly. Slowly.... What do I want? What's the man's name? Herr von Dorsday. Funny name.... Here's the card room. Green curtain over the door. They see nothing. I'll stand on tiptoe. A game of whist. They play every evening. Two gentlemen are playing chess over there. Herr von Dorsday isn't here. Victory! Saved! But how so? I must look further. I'm condemned to look for Herr von Dorsday till the end of my life. Probably he's looking for me too. We always miss one another. Perhaps he's looking for me upstairs. We'll meet on the steps. The Dutch people are staring at me again. The daughter is very pretty. The old gentleman has spectacles, spectacles, spectacles.... Fifty thousand. That's not so much, fifty thousand, Herr von Dorsday.



Schumann? Yes, Carnival. I once studied that myself. She plays well. But why she? Perhaps it's a he. Perhaps it's a virtuoso. I'll take one look into the music room.
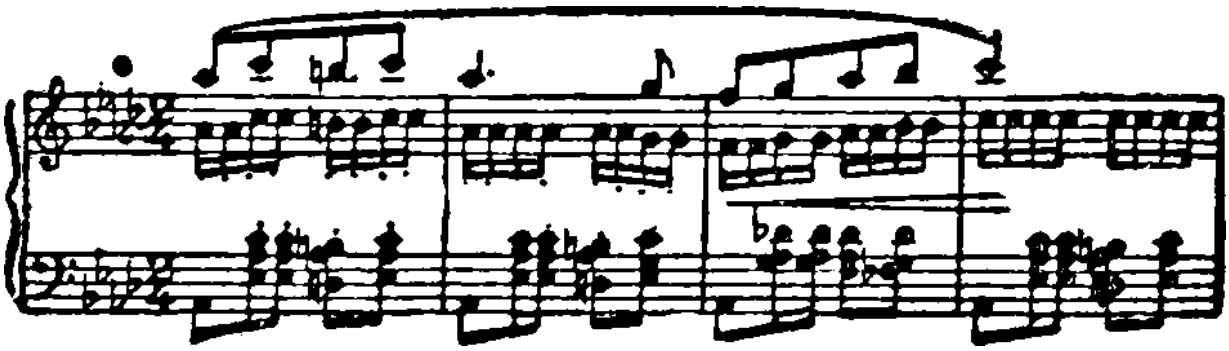
Yes, there's the door. — Dorsday! I'm falling. Dorsday! He's standing at the window, listening. Is it really possible? I'm burning up — I'm going insane — I'm dead — and he's listening to a strange lady playing piano. Two gentlemen are sitting on the divan. The blond one just arrived today. I saw him get out of the carriage. The lady's no longer young. She's been here for a couple of days. I didn't know that she played piano so beautifully. She's well off. All people
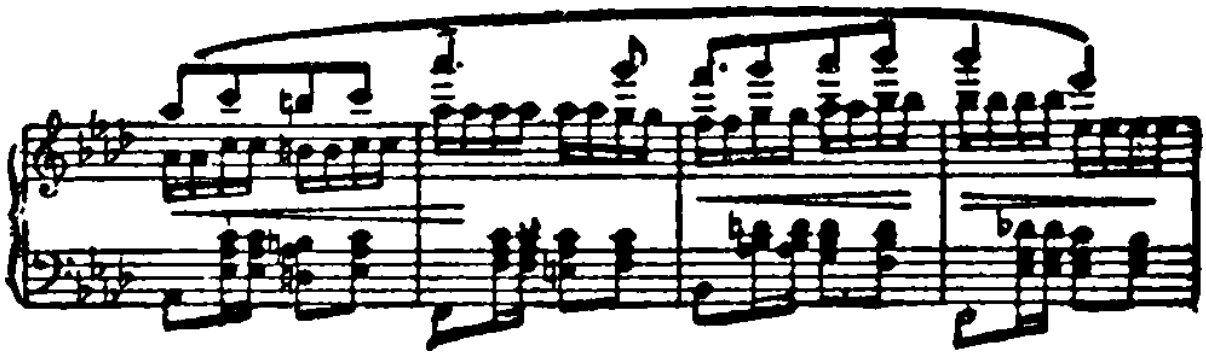


are well off... only I am doomed... Dorsday! Dorsday! Is that really he?

He doesn't see me. Now he looks like a decent person. He's listening. Fifty thousand. Now or never. Open the door softly. Here I am, Herr von Dorsday! He doesn't see me. I'll signal to him just once with my eyes; then I'll raise the coat a little. That'll be enough. After all, I'm a young girl. A decent young girl from a good family. Not a prostitute.... I want to go away. I want to take veronal and sleep. You've made a mistake, Herr

von Dorsday. I'm no prostitute. Adieu, adieu!... Oh, he's looking up. Here I am, Herr von Dorsday. What eyes he's making. His lips tremble. His eyes are burning into my forehead. He doesn't suspect that there's nothing beneath the coat. Let me go. Let me go. His eyes are shining. His eyes are threatening. What do you want of me? You're a rotter. Nobody sees me — except him. They're listening. So come then, Herr von Dorsday! Don't you notice anything? There in the fauteuil — great God, in the fauteuil — there's the Filou! Heaven be praised! He's here again. He's here again! He was only on a trip and now he's here again. The Roman head is here again. My bridegroom, my beloved! But he doesn't see me. Nor should he see me. What do you want, Herr von Dorsday? You look at me as though I were your slave. I'm not your slave. Fifty thousand! Does our agreement still hold, Herr von Dorsday? I'm ready. Here I am. I'm quite calm. I'm smiling. You understand my look? His eyes say to me: come! His eyes say: I want to see you naked. Well, you swine, I *am* naked. What more do you want? Send the message... immediately. Chills are running up and down my spine. She's playing on. How wonderful it is to be



naked. Chills are running up and down



my spine. She's playing on. She doesn't realize what's happening here. Nobody realizes it. No one sees me yet. Filou! Filou! Here I'm standing naked! Dorsday opens his eyes wide. At last he believes it. The Filou gets up. His eyes are glowing. You understand me, beautiful youth. "Ha, ha." The lady is playing no more. Father is saved. Fifty thousand! Address remains Fiala! "Ha, ha, ha!" Who's laughing there? Am I laughing? "Ha, ha, ha!" What are all those faces around me? "Ha, ha, ha!" How stupid of me to laugh. "Ha, ha, ha!" I don't want to laugh — I don't want to. "Ha, ha!"— "*Else!*" — Who's calling Else? That's Paul. He must be behind me. I feel his breath on my bare back. My ears are ringing. Perhaps I'm already dead. What do you wish, Herr von Dorsday? Why are you so enormous, and why are you staggering towards me? "Ha, ha, ha!" Now what have I done? What have I done? What have I done? I'm falling. All is over. Why has the music stopped? An arm is supporting my back. That's Paul. Where's the Filou? I'm lying here. "Ha, ha, ha!" The coat's thrown over me and I'm lying here. The people think me unconscious. No, I'm not unconscious. I'm in all my senses. I'm a hundred times awake, a thousand times awake. Only, I always have to laugh. "Ha, ha, ha!" Now you have your wish, Herr von Dorsday. You must send the money to Father, immediately.

“Haaaaah!” I don’t want to cry out and I always have to cry out. Why must I cry out? — My eyes are closed. No one can see me. Father is saved. “*Else*!” —

That’s my aunt. “Else! Else!”— “A doctor, a doctor!”— “Run for the porter!”— ‘What’s happened?”— “It’s impossible.”— “The poor child.” — What are they talking about there? What’s all this murmuring? I’m no poor child. I’m happy. The Filou has seen me naked. Oh, I’m so ashamed! What have I done? Never again will I open my eyes. “Please close the door.” — Why close the door? What a murmur! A thousand people are crowding around me. They’ll think I’m unconscious. I’m not unconscious. I’m only dreaming. “Try to calm yourself, my dear lady.”— “Has a doctor been sent for?” — It’s a fainting spell. “ — How far away they all are. They’re all speaking from Cimone. “We can’t let her lie on the floor.”— “Here’s a shawl.”— “A blanket.”— “A blanket, or a shawl — it’s all the same.”— “Quiet, please.”— “On the divan.”— “Will you please close that door!”— “Don’t be so nervous. It’s already closed.”— “Else! Else!” — If my aunt would only be quiet!— “Do you hear me, Else?”— “Don’t you see, Mother, that she’s unconscious?” — Yes, thank God, to you I’m unconscious and I’ll remain unconscious. “We must take her up to her room.”— “What’s happened here, for God’s sake?” — Cissy. How does Cissy happen to be in the meadow? Ah, but it isn’t the meadow. “Else!”— “Please be quiet.”— “Please step back a bit.” — Hands, hands under me. What do they want? How heavy I am. Paul’s hands. Go away, go away. The Filou’s near me; I can feel it. And Dorsday’s gone. They must look for him. He mayn’t kill himself before he has sent off the fifty thousand. My good people, he owes me money. Arrest him. “Have you any idea from whom the message was, Paul?”— “Good evening, my good people.”— “Else, do you hear me?”— “Just let her be, Frau Cissy.”— “Oh, Paul.”— “The manager says it may be four hours before the doctor arrives.”— “She looks as though she were sleeping” — I’m lying on the divan. Paul is holding my hand. He is feeling my pulse. Right. After all, he’s a physician. “She’s not at all in danger, Mother. An — attack”— “I won’t stay in this hotel a day longer”— “Please, Mother.”— “We’ll leave promptly tomorrow morning.”— “It will be easier to take her over the servants’ stairway. The stretcher will be here immediately.” — Stretcher? Haven’t I already been on a stretcher today? Haven’t I already been dead? Do I have to die again?— “Won’t you please see to it, Herr Director, that the people at least stand clear of the door?”— “Please don’t worry so, Mother.”— “It’s terribly inconsiderate of all these people.” — Why are they all whispering? It’s like a death chamber. The stretcher will be here at once. Open the gate, Sir Matador,— “The path is clear.”— “The people might at least have as much consideration as to—”— “Please, Mother, please calm yourself.”— “Please, my dear lady.”— “Won’t you look after my mother for a while, Frau Cissy?” — She’s his mistress, but she isn’t as beautiful as I am. What’s that again? What’s happening there? They’re bringing in the stretcher. I can see it with closed eyes. That’s the stretcher for the injured. They laid Dr. Zigmondi on it when he fell off the Cimone. And now I’m to lie on the same stretcher. I fell too. “Ha!” No, I won’t cry out again. They’re whispering. Who’s bending over my head? It smells like cigarettes. His hand is under my head. Hands under my back. Hands under my legs. Go away, all of you. Don’t touch me. Shame, shame! What do you want, anyway? Leave me alone. It was only for Father. “Please, carefully, so, slowly.”— “The shawl?”— “Yes, thank you, Frau Cissy” — Why is he thanking her? What has she done for him? What will they do to me? Oh, how good, how good! I’m shivering, shivering. I’m shivering all over. They’re carrying me, carrying me. They’re carrying me to my grave. “Oh, I’m, used to that, Doctor. Heavier people have already lain on the stretcher. Once last fall, there were even two.”— “Sssh, ssh.”— “Perhaps you’d be so good as to go ahead, Frau Cissy, and see that everything in Else’s room is in order.” — What right has Cissy to go in my room? The veronal! The veronal! If only they don’t pour it out. If they did that I’d have to jump out of the window. “Thank you very much, Herr Director, don’t bother further.”— “I’ll take the liberty of inquiring again later on.” — The steps are

squeaking. The carriers are wearing heavy mountain-boots. Where are my patent leathers? Back in the music room. They'll be stolen. I wanted to will them to Agatha. Fred gets my fountain pen. They're carrying me, they're carrying me. Funeral procession. Where's Dorsday, the murderer? He's gone away, and so has the Filou. He has gone away too. He has gone back to his wanderings. He came back just for a glimpse of my white body. And now he's gone away again. He's going on a hazardous path between rocks and precipices. Farewell, farewell. — I'm shivering, shivering. Let them carry me upstairs, always further up, up to the roof, up to the sky. It would be so comfortable there. "I've seen it coming all along, Paul." — What has Aunt seen coming? "For the past few days I've seen it coming along. She's really not normal. Of course, she must go to an asylum."— "But, Mother, this certainly isn't the time to speak of that." — Asylum —? Asylum —?!— "*You don't really imagine, Paul, that I'd return to Vienna in the same compartment with this person. We'd go through some pretty experiences.*"— "*Nothing whatsoever will happen to you, Mother. I'll guarantee that you won't have the slightest embarrassment.*"— "*How can you guarantee that?*" — No, Aunt, you'll have no embarrassment. Nobody will be embarrassed. Not even Herr von Dorsday.

Where are we now? We're standing still. We're on the second floor. I'll just open my eyes for a second. Cissy's standing there in the doorway talking with Paul. "*Over this way, please. So. Here. Thank you. Move the stretcher very close to the bed.*" — They're lifting the stretcher. They're carrying me. It feels good. Now I'm home again. Ah!— "*Thank you. This way. That's right. Please close the door. — If you'd be so good as to help me, Cissy.*"— "*Oh, with pleasure, Herr Doctor.*"— "*Slowly, please. Here, please, Cissy, take hold of her here. Here at the legs. Carefully, now. And then — Else —? Do you hear me, Else?*" — Why of course I hear you, Paul. I hear everything, but what does that matter to you? It's so wonderful to be unconscious. Oh, go ahead and do as you please. "*Paul!*"

— — "*gnädige Frau?*"— "*Do you really think that she's unconscious, Paul dear?*"

—— Paul dear? She calls him dear! — I've caught you! Dear is what she calls him!

— "Yes, she's altogether unconscious. That's what generally happens after an attack like this."— "Paul, I could laugh myself sick when you act so mature in your medical manner." — I've caught you, you hypocrites! I've caught you. "Keep quiet, Cissy."— "Why should I keep quiet if she can't hear anything?" — What's happened? I'm lying naked in bed under the covers. How did they get me here?:— "Well, how is she? Better?" — That's Aunt. What does she want now?— "She's still unconscious?" — She's creeping around the room on tiptoe. She can go to the devil. I won't be taken to an asylum. I'm not insane. "*Isn't there any way of waking her up?*"— "*She'll soon come to, Mother. She needs nothing right now except rest. So do you, Mother. Don't you want to sleep? There's absolutely no danger. I'll stay here with Frau Cissy and take care of Else through the night.*"— "*Yes, indeed, dear lady, I'll be the chaperon, or Else will be, depending on how you look at it.*" — Horrible woman. Here I'm lying unconscious and she's joking. "*And I can definitely depend upon it, Paul, that you'll wake me just as soon as the doctor arrives?*"— "*But, Mother, he wont be here until morning*"— "*She looks as though she is sleeping. Her breathing is regular.*"— "*As a matter of fact, Mother, it is a sort of sleep.*"— "*I still cant control myself, Paul. Such a scandal! — You'll see, it'll appear in all the papers.*"— "*Mother!*"— "*But she can't hear anything if she's unconscious. We're talking very quietly.*"— "*In this condition the senses are sometimes unusually acute.*"

— "You have such a learned son, gnädige Frau."— "Please, Mother, go to bed."— "Tomorrow morning we'll leave, no matter what happens. And in Bozen we'll get a nurse for Else." — What? A nurse? You will be disappointed in that, too. "Well, we'll talk about all that tomorrow. Good night, Mother."— "I'll have a cup of tea brought up to my room and look in here again in a quarter of an hour."— "That's absolutely unnecessary, Mother.". — No, it certainly isn't necessary. You just go to the devil. Where's the veronal? I'll

have to wait. They're taking my aunt to the door. No one can see me now. It must be on the night table, that glass of veronal. If I drink it, all will be over. I'll drink it immediately. My aunt is away. Paul and Cissy are standing by the door. Ha, she's kissing him. She's kissing him, and I'm lying naked under the covers. Aren't you two ashamed of yourselves? She's kissing him again. Aren't you two ashamed of yourselves?— "Do you see, Paul? Now I know that she's unconscious. Otherwise she'd jump up at me."— "Won't you please do me a favor, Cissy, and be quiet?"— "But why, Paul? Either she is really unconscious, in which case she can hear and see nothing, or else she's making fools of us. If that's so, it serves her altogether right."— "Someone's knocked."— "I thought so, too."— "I'll open the door softly and see who it is. — Good evening, Herr von Dorsday."— "Excuse me, I just wanted to inquire how Else is." — Dorsday! Dorsday! Does he really dare? How beastly. Where is he? I hear them whispering in front of the door, Paul and Dorsday. Cissy is standing before the mirror. What are you doing there by the mirror? It's my mirror. Isn't my picture still in it? What are they talking about in front of the door, Paul and Dorsday? I feel Cissy's gaze. She's looking at me through the mirror. What does she want? Why is she coming nearer? Help! Help! I'm calling and no one hears me. What do you want at my bed, Cissy?! Why are you bending over me? Do you want to strangle me? I can't move. "*Else!*" — What does she want?— "*Else! Do you hear me, Else?*" — I hear, but I can't talk. I'm powerless. I can't talk. "*Else, you gave us a nice fright downstairs.*" — She talks to me just as though I were awake. What does she want?— "*Do you know what you have done, Else? Just think. You came down to the music room dressed only in your coat and suddenly you stood there naked before all the people, and then you fell down unconscious. They say it was a hysterical attack. I don't believe a word of it. I also don't believe that you're unconscious. I'll bet you re hearing every word of what I'm saying.*" — Yes, I hear, yes, yes, yes. But she doesn't hear me. Why not? I can't move my lips. That's why she can't hear me. I can't move. What's the matter with me? Am I dead? Do I seem dead? Am I dreaming? Where's the veronal? I want to drink my veronal, but I can't stretch out my arm. Go away, Cissy. Why are you bending over me? Go away, go away. She'll never know that I heard her. No one will ever know. I'll never talk to anyone again. I'll never wake up again. She's going to the door. She's turning around once more to look at me. She's opening the door. Dorsday's standing there. I've just seen him with my eyes closed. No, I really see him. My eyes are open. The door's ajar. Cissy is outside. Now they're all whispering. I'm alone. If I could only move now.

Ha! I can. Yes! I can move my hand. I'm stretching out my finger. I'm stretching 'out my arm. I'm opening my eyes wide. I see. I see. There's my glass. Quick, before they come into the room again. Are there enough veronal powders in it? I must never awaken again. What I had to do in the world I've done. Father is saved. I could never go out among people again. Paul is peering through the door. He thinks I'm unconscious. He doesn't see that I have my arm almost extended. Now they're all three standing outside of the room again. The murderers! — They're all murderers, Dorsday and Cissy and Paul. Also, Fred is a murderer and Mother is a murderer. They all murdered me and say nothing about it. They'll say, "She committed suicide." All of you killed me. All of you killed me. All of you. All of you. Well, have I finally reached it? Quick, quick. I must. I mustn't spill a drop. So, quick. It tastes good. More, more. It isn't poison at all. Nothing ever tasted so good. If you only knew how good death tastes! Good night, my glass. Klirr, klirr! What's that? The glass is lying on the floor. It's lying down there. Good night. "*Else! Else!*" — What do they want?— "*Else!*" — Are you here again? Good morning. Here I am lying unconscious with closed eyes. You'll never see my eyes again. "*She must have moved, Paul. How else could the glass have dropped?*"— "*It was an involuntary movement. That would have been quite possible.*"— "*Well, if she isn't awake.*"— "*What's the matter with you, anyhow, Cissy? Just look at her.*" — I've drunk veronal. I'll die. But everything is just as it was before. Perhaps it wasn't enough. Paul's holding my hand. "*The pulse is quiet. But don't laugh, Cissy.*

The poor girl."— "I wonder whether you'd call me a poor girl too if I'd stood naked in the center of the music room?"— "Won't you please keep still, Cissy?"— "Just as you wish, my dear sir. Perhaps I ought to go away so that I can leave you alone with the naked lady. But please don't be embarrassed. Just act as though I weren't here at all." — I've drunk veronal. It's good. I'll die. Thank God. "Well, now, I'll tell you what I think. I think that this Herr von Dorsday is in love with the naked lady. He was as excited as though it were a personal matter with him." — Dorsday, Dorsday! Why, that's the — Fifty thousand! Will he send it off? For God's sake, what will happen if he doesn't? I must tell him. They must bring him back. For God's sake, all this might be for nothing. But I can still be saved. Paul! Cissy! Why don't you hear me? Don't you know that I'm dying? But I don't feel anything. I'm just tired. Paul, I'm just tired. Don't you hear me? I'm tired, Paul. I can't open my lips. I can't move my tongue, but I'm not dead yet. That's the veronal. Where are you, anyhow? I'll fall asleep presently. Then it will be too late. I don't hear them talking at all. They're talking, and I don't know it. Their voices buzz so. Oh, Paul, please help me! My tongue is so heavy. "I think, Cissy, that she'll soon wake up. She looks as though she's trying to open her eyes. Well, Cissy, what are you doing now?"— "I'm only putting my arms around you. Why shouldn't I? I know she didn't have any sense of shame either." — No, I had no sense of shame. I stood there naked before all those people. If I could only speak you would understand. Paul! Paul! I want you to hear me. I drank veronal, Paul. Ten powders, a hundred. I didn't want to do it. I was mad. I don't want to die. Save me, Paul. You're a doctor. Save me!— "She seems to be quiet again. Her pulse is fairly regular." — Save me, Paul. I implore you. Don't let me die. There is still time. But I'll soon fall asleep, and you won't know it. I don't want to die. Please save me. It was only for Father's sake. Dorsday insisted on it. Paul! Paul!— "Look, Cissy, doesn't it seem to you that she's smiling?"— "Well, why shouldn't she smile, Paul, when you constantly hold her hand so tenderly?" — Cissy, Cissy, what did I ever do to you that you are so cruel? Keep your Paul, but don't let me die. I'm so young. Mother will grieve. I still want to climb many mountains. I still want to dance. And some day I'll marry. I still want to travel. Tomorrow we're going on a trip up the Cimone. Tomorrow will be a lovely day. The Filou will come along. I'll invite him humbly. Run after him, Paul. He's going his hazardous way. He'll meet Father. Address remains Fiala. Don't forget that. It's only fifty thousand and then everything will be all right. Look, they're all marching in convicts' clothes, and singing. Open the gate, Sir Matador! It's all just a dream. And here comes Fred with his hoarse lady. And the piano's out under the great, broad sky. The piano tuner lives in Bartenstein Street, Mother! Why didn't you write to him, child? You always forget everything. You ought to practice more scales, Else. A girl of thirteen ought to be more industrious. Rudi was at a masked ball and he came home at eight o'clock in the morning. What have you brought along for me, Father? Thirty thousand dolls. I'll need a separate house for them. But perhaps they can go strolling in the garden. Or go with Rudi to the masked ball. God bless you, Else. Oh, Bertha, are you back from Naples again? Yes, from Sicily. I want you to meet my husband, Else. Enchanté, Monsieur. "Else, do you hear me, Else? Ifs I, Paul." — Haha, Paul. Why are you sitting on the giraffe on the merry-go-round?— "Else, Else!" — Don't ride away from me. You can't hear me if you ride so fast through the main street. I want you to save me. I've taken veronalica. It's running over my legs, right and left, like ants. Go and catch Herr von Dorsday. There he goes. Don't you see him? There he jumps over the pond. He's killed Father, so run after him. I'll run with you. They've strapped the stretcher over my back, but I'll run along. I'm trembling so, but I'll run along. Where are you, Paul? Fred, where are you? Mother, where are you? Cissy? Why do you all let me run alone? I'm afraid being so alone. I'd rather fly. I knew it. I can fly.

"*Else!*"...

"*Else!*"...

Where are you? I hear you, but I don't see you.

"*Else!*"...

"*Else!*"...

"*Else!*"...

What's that? A whole chorus? And an organ too? I'm singing along. What's the song they're all singing? Everybody's singing along. The woods too, and the mountains, and the stars. Never have I heard anything so beautiful. Never have I seen such a brilliant night. Give me your hand, Father. We'll fly together. The world is so beautiful when you can fly. Don't kiss my hand. I'm your child, Father.

"*Else! Else!*"

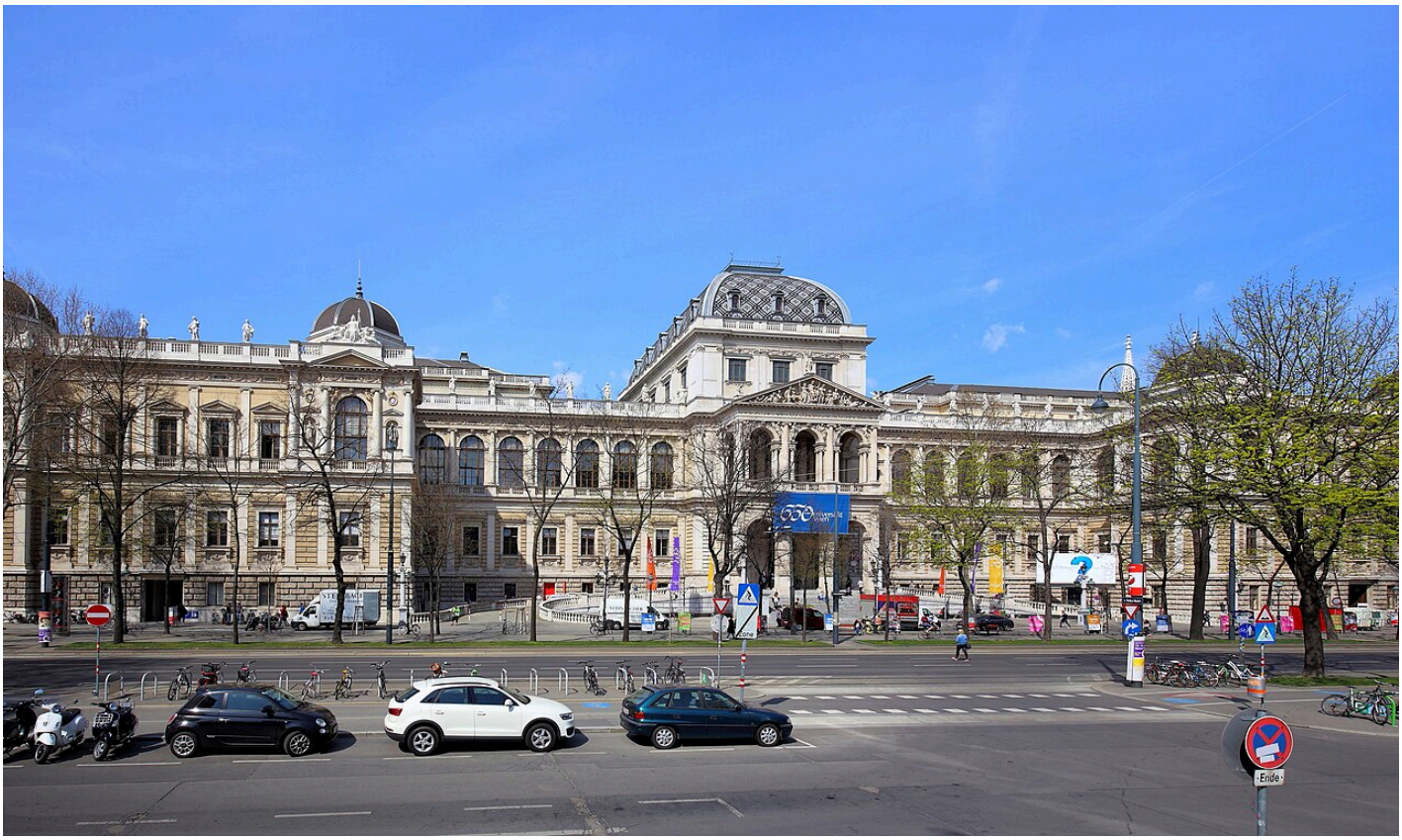
They're calling me from so far away. What do you all want? Don't wake me. Oh, I'm sleeping so well. Tomorrow morning. I'm dreaming and flying. I'm flying... flying... flying... sleeping and dreaming... and flying... not waking... early morning...

"El..."

I'm flying... I'm dreaming... I'm sleeping... I'm drea... drea — I'm fly...

THE END

The Other Novels



University of Vienna — where Schnitzler studied medicine for six years

The Road into the Open (1908)

Original German Title: 'Der Weg ins Freie'

Translated by Horace Samuel, 1913

First published in Berlin by S. Fischer Verlag in 1908, *Der Weg ins Freie* tells the story of the aristocratic young composer Georg von Wergenthin-Recco, who has talent, yet lacks the drive to get down to work. Instead, he spends the majority of his time socialising with members of the assimilationist, artistically sensitive Jewish bourgeoisie of Vienna and other non-Jews like himself that enjoy their company.

The plot centres on Georg's affair with a Catholic lower middle class girl named Anna Rosner. The novel's reputation rests not on the story of this affair, however, but on Schnitzler's engaging description, sourced from first-hand experience, of the milieu he describes and the topics that interest him, including the arts and the psychology of love. The novel is also well-known for its description of how anti-Semitism was gradually dominating so much of life and politics in Austria-Hungary at the time.



Schnitzler, close to the time of publication

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I

GEORGE VON WERGENTHIN sat at table quite alone to-day. His elder brother Felician had chosen to dine out with friends for the first time after a longish interval. But George felt no particular inclination to renew his acquaintance with Ralph Skelton, Count Schönstein or any of the other young people, whose gossip usually afforded him so much pleasure; for the time being he did not feel in the mood for any kind of society.

The servant cleared away and disappeared. George lit a cigarette and then in accordance with his habit walked up and down the big three-windowed rather low room, while he wondered how it was that this very room which had for many weeks seemed to him so gloomy was now gradually beginning to regain its former air of cheerfulness. He could not help letting his glance linger on the empty chair at the top end of the table, over which the September sun was streaming through the open window in the centre. He felt as though he had seen his father, who had died two months ago, sit there only an hour back, as he visualised with great clearness the very slightest mannerisms of the dead man, even down to his trick of pushing his coffee-cup away, adjusting his pince-nez or turning over the leaves of a pamphlet.

George thought of one of his last conversations with his father which had occurred in the late spring before they had moved to the villa on the Veldeser Lake. George had just then come back from Sicily, where he had spent April with Grace on a melancholy and somewhat boring farewell tour before his mistress's final return to America. He had done no real work for six months or more, and had not even copied out the plaintive adagio which he had heard in the plashing of the waves on a windy morning in Palermo as he walked along the beach. George had played over the theme to his father and improvised on it with an exaggerated wealth of harmonies which almost swamped the original melody, and when he had launched into a wildly modulated variation, his father had smilingly asked him from the other end of the piano— "Whither away, whither away?" George had felt abashed and allowed the swell of the notes to subside, and his father had begun a discussion about his son's future with all his usual affection, but with rather more than his usual seriousness. This conversation ran through his mind to-day as though it had been pregnant with presage. He stood at the window and looked out. The park outside was fairly empty. An old woman wearing an old-fashioned cloak with glass beads sat on a seat. A nursemaid walked past holding one child by the hand while another, a little boy, in a hussar uniform, with a buckled-on sabre and a pistol in his belt, ran past, looked haughtily round and saluted a veteran who came down the path smoking. Further down the grounds were a few people sitting round the kiosk, drinking coffee and reading the papers. The foliage was still fairly thick, and the park looked depressed and dusty and altogether far more summer-like than usual for late September.

George rested his arms on the window-sill, leant forwards and looked at the sky. He had not left Vienna since his father's death, though he had had many opportunities of so doing. He could have gone with Felician to the Schönstein estate; Frau Ehrenberg had written him a charming letter inviting him to come to Auhof; he could easily have found a companion for that long-planned cycle-tour through Carinthia and the Tyrol, which he had not the energy to undertake alone. But he preferred to stay in Vienna and occupy his time with perusing and putting in order the old family papers. He found archives which went as far back as his great-grandfather Anastasius von Wergenthin, who haled from the Rhine district and had by his marriage with a Fräulein Recco become possessed of an old castle near Bozen which had been uninhabitable for a long period. There were also documents dealing with the history of George's grandfather, a major of artillery who had fallen before Chlum in the year 1866.

The major's son, the father of Felician and himself, had devoted himself to scientific studies, principally botany, and had taken at Innsbruck the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. At the age of twenty-four he had made the acquaintance of a young girl of an old family of Austrian officials, who had brought her up to be a singer, more with a view to rendering her independent of the limited, not to say impoverished, resources of the household, than because she had any real vocation. Baron von Wergenthin saw and heard her for the first time at a concert-performance of the Missa Solemnis and in the following May she became his wife. Three years later the health of the Baroness began to fail, and she was ordered South by the doctors. She did not recover as soon as was anticipated, with the result that the house in Vienna was given up, and the Baron and his family lived for several years a kind of hotel-life, as they travelled from one place to another. His business and studies frequently summoned the Baron to Vienna, but the sons never left their mother. The family lived in Sicily, Rome, Tunis, Corfu, Athens, Malta, Merano, the Riviera, and finally in Florence; never in very great style, but fairly well nevertheless, and without curtailing their expenditure sufficiently to prevent a substantial part of the Baron's fortune being gradually eaten up. George was eighteen when his mother died. Nine years had passed since then, but the memory of that spring evening was still as vivid as ever, when his father and brother had happened to be out, and he had stood alone and helpless by his mother's death-bed, while the talk and laughter of the passers-by had flowed in with the spring air through the hastily opened windows with all the jar of its unwelcome noise.

The survivors took their mother's body back to Vienna. The Baron devoted himself to his studies with new and desperate zeal. He had formerly enjoyed the reputation of an aristocratic dilettante, but he now began to be taken quite seriously even in academic circles, and when he was elected honorary president of the Botanical Society he owed that distinction to something more than the accident of a noble name. Felician and George entered themselves as law students. But after some time their father himself encouraged the boys to abandon their university studies, and go in for a more general education and one more in accordance with their musical tendencies. George felt thankful and relieved at this new departure. But even in this sphere which he had chosen himself, he was by no means industrious, and he would often occupy himself for weeks on end with all manner of things that had nothing at all to do with his musical career.

It was this same trait of dilettantism which made him now go through the old family documents as seriously as though he were investigating some important secrets of the past. He spent many hours busying himself with letters which his parents had exchanged in years gone by, wistful letters and superficial letters, melancholy letters and placid letters, which brought back again to life not merely the departed ones themselves but other men and women half sunk in oblivion. His German tutor now appeared to him again with his sad pale forehead just as he used to declaim his Horace to him on their long walks, there floated up in his mind the wild brown boyish face of Prince Alexander of Macedon in whose company George had had his first riding lessons in Rome; and then the Pyramids of Cestius limned as though in a dream with black lines on a pale blue horizon reared their peaks, just as George had seen them once in the twilight as he came home from his first ride in the Campagna. And as he abandoned himself still more to his reverie there appeared sea-shores, gardens and streets, though he had no knowledge of the landscape or the town that had furnished them to his memory; images of human beings swept past him; some of these, whom he had met casually on some trivial occasion, were very clear, others again, with whom he might at some time or other have passed many days, were shadowy and distant.

When George had finished inspecting the old letters and was putting his own papers in order, he found in an old green case some musical jottings of his boyhood, whose very existence had so completely vanished from his memory, that if they had been put before him as the records of some one else he would not have

known the difference. Some affected him with a kind of pleasant pain, for they seemed to him to contain promises which he was perhaps never to fulfil. And yet he had been feeling lately that something had been hatching within him. He saw his development as a mysterious but definite line which showed the way from those first promising notes in the green case to quite new ideas, and this much he knew — the two songs out of the "Westöstliche Divan" which he had set to music this summer on a sultry afternoon, while Felician lay in his hammock and his father worked in his armchair on the cool terrace, could not have been composed by your ordinary person.

George moved back a step from the window as though surprised by an absolutely unexpected thought. He had never before realised with such clearness that there had been an absolute break in his life since his father's death down to to-day. During the whole time he had not given a single thought to Anna Rosner to whom he had sent the songs in manuscript. And he felt pleasurably thrilled at the thought that he could hear her melodious melancholy voice again and accompany her singing on that somewhat heavy piano, as soon as he wished. And he remembered the old house in the Paulanergasse, with its low door and badly lighted stairs which he had not been up more than three or four times, in the mood in which a man thinks of something which he has known very long and held very dear.

A slight soughing traversed the leaves in the park outside. Thin clouds appeared over the spire of the Stephan Tower, which stood directly opposite the window, on the other side of the park, and over a largish part of the town. George was faced with a long afternoon without any engagements. It seemed to him as though all his former friendships during the two months of mourning had dissolved or broken up. He thought of the past spring and winter with all their complications and mad whirl of gaiety, and all kinds of images came back into his memory — the ride with Frau Marianne in the closed fiacre through the snow-covered forest. The masked ball at Ehrenberg's with Else's subtly-naive remarks about "Hedda Gabler" with whom she insisted she felt a certain affinity, and with Sissy's hasty kiss from under the black lace of her mask. A mountain expedition in the snow from Edlach up to the Rax with Count Schönstein and Oskar Ehrenberg, who, though very far from being a born mountaineer, had jumped at the opportunity of tacking himself on to two blue-blooded gentlemen. The evening at Ronacher's with Grace and young Labinski, who had shot himself four days afterwards either on account of Grace, debts, satiety, or as a sheer piece of affectation. The strange hot and cold conversation with Grace in the cemetery in the melting February snow two days after Labinski's funeral. The evening in the hot lofty fencing-room where Felician's sword had crossed the dangerous blade of the Italian master. The walk at night after the Paderewski concert when his father had spoken to him more intimately than ever before of that long-past evening on which his dead mother had sung in the Missa Solemnis in the very hall which they had just come out of. And finally Anna Rosner's tall quiet figure appeared to him, leaning on the piano, with the score in her hand, and her smiling blue eyes turned towards the keys, and he even heard her voice reverberating in his soul.

While he stood like this at the window and looked down at the park which was gradually becoming animated, he felt a certain consolation in the fact that he had no close ties with any human being, and that there were so many people to whom he could attach himself once more and whose set he could enter again as soon as the fancy took him. He felt at the same time wonderfully rested and more in the vein for work and happiness than he had ever been. He was full of great bold resolutions and joyfully conscious of his youth and independence. He no doubt felt a certain shame at the thought that at any rate at the present moment his grief for his dead father was much alleviated; but he found a relief for this indifference of his in the thought of his dear father's painless end. He had been walking up and down the garden chatting with his two sons, had suddenly looked round him as though he heard voices in the distance, had then looked up towards the sky and

had suddenly dropped down dead on the sward, without a cry of pain or even a twitching of the lips.

George went back into the room, got ready to go out and left the house. He intended to walk about for a couple of hours wherever chance might take him, and in the evening to work again at his quintette, for which he now felt in the right mood. He crossed the street and went into the park. The sultriness had passed. The old woman in the cloak still sat on the seat and stared in front of her. Children were playing on the sandy playground round the trees. All the chairs round the kiosk were taken. A clean-shaven gentleman sat in the summer-house whom George knew by sight and who had impressed him by his likeness to the elder Grillparzer. By the pond George met a governess with two well-dressed children and received a flashing glance. When he got out of the Park into the Ringstrasse he met Willy Eissler who was wearing a long autumn overcoat with dark stripes and began to speak to him.

"Good afternoon, Baron, so you've come back to Vienna again."

"I've been back a long time," answered George. "I didn't leave Vienna again after my father's death."

"Yes, yes, quite so.... Allow me, once again...." And Willy shook hands with George.

"And what have you been doing this summer?" asked George.

"All kinds of things. Played tennis, and painted, rotted about, had some amusing times and a lot of boring ones...." Willy spoke extremely quickly, with a deliberate though slight hoarseness, briskly and yet nonchalantly with a combination of the Hungarian, French, Viennese and Jewish accents. "Anyway, I came early to-day, just as you see me now, from Przemysl," he continued.

"Drill?"

"Yes, the last one. I'm sorry to say so. Though I'm nearly an old man, I've always found it a joke to trot about with my yellow epaulettes, clanking my spurs, dragging my sabre along, spreading an atmosphere of impending peril, and being taken by incompetent Lavaters for a noble count." They walked along by the side of the railing of the Stadtpark.

"Going to Ehrenbergs' by any chance?" asked Willy.

"No, I never thought of it."

"Because this is the way. I say, have you heard, Fräulein Else is supposed to be engaged?"

"Really?" queried George slowly. "And whom to?"

"Guess, Baron."

"Come, Hofrat Wilt?"

"Great heavens!" cried Willy, "I'm sure it's never entered his head! Becoming S. Ehrenberg's son-in-law might result in prejudicing his government career — nowadays."

George went on guessing. "Rittmeister Ladisc?"

"Oh no, Fräulein Else is far too clever to be taken in by him."

George then remembered that Willy had fought a duel with Ladisc a few years back. Willy felt George's look, twirled somewhat nervously his blonde moustache which drooped in the Polish fashion and began to speak quickly and offhandedly.

"The fact that Rittmeister Ladisc and myself once had a difference cannot prevent me from loyally recognising the fact that he is, and always has been, a drunken swine. I have an invincible repulsion, which even blood cannot wash out, against those people who gorge themselves sick at Jewish houses and then start slanging the Jews as soon as they get on the door-steps. They ought to be able to wait till they got to the café. But don't exert yourself any more by guessing. Heinrich Bermann is the lucky man."

"Impossible," said George.

"Why?" asked Eissler. "It had to be some one sooner or later. Bermann is no Adonis, I agree, but he's a

coming man, and Else's official ideal of a mixture of gentleman-rider and athlete will never turn up. Meanwhile she has reached twenty-four, and she must have had enough by now of Salomon's tactless remarks and Salomon's jokes."

"Salomon? — oh, yes — Ehrenberg."

"You only know him by the initial S? S of course stands for Salomon... and as for only S standing on the door, that is simply a concession he made to his family. If he could follow his own fancy he would prefer to turn up at the parties Madame Ehrenberg gives in a caftan and side-curls."

"Do you think so? He's not so very strict?"

"Strict?... Really now! It's nothing at all to do with strictness. It is only cussedness, particularly against his son Oskar with his feudal ideals."

"Really," said George with a smile, "wasn't Oskar baptised long ago? Why, he's a reserve officer in the dragoons."

"That's why... well, I've not been baptised and nevertheless... yes... there are always exceptions... with good will...." He laughed and went on. "As for Oskar, he would personally prefer to be a Catholic. But he thought for the time being he would have to pay too dearly for the pleasure of being able to go to confession. There's sure to be a provision in the will to take care that Oskar doesn't 'vert over."

They had arrived in front of the Café Imperial. Willy remained standing. "I've got an appointment here with Demeter Stanzides."

"Please remember me to him."

"Thanks very much. Won't you come in and have an ice?"

"Thanks, I'll prowl about a little more."

"You like solitude?"

"It's hard to give an answer to so general a question," replied George.

"Of course," said Willy, suddenly grew serious and lifted his hat. "Good afternoon, Baron."

George held out his hand. He felt that Willy was a man who was continually defending a position though there was no pressing necessity for him to do so.

"Au revoir," he said with real sincerity. He felt now as he had often done before, that it was almost extraordinary that Willy should be a Jew. Why, old Eissler, Willy's father, who composed charming Viennese waltzes and songs, was a connoisseur and collector, and sometimes a seller of antiquities, and objets d'art, and had passed in his day for the most celebrated boxer in Vienna, was, what with his long grey beard and his monocle, far more like a Hungarian magnate than a Jewish patriarch. Besides, Willy's own temperament, his deliberate cultivation of it and his iron will had made him into the deceptive counterpart of a feudal gentleman bred and born. What, however, distinguished him from other young people of similar race and ambition was the fact that he was accustomed to admit his origin, to demand explanation or satisfaction for every ambiguous smile, and to make merry himself over all the prejudices and vanities of which he was so often the victim.

George strode along, and Willy's last question echoed in his ears. Did he love solitude?... He remembered how he had walked about in Palermo for whole mornings while Grace, following her usual habit, lay in bed till noon.... Where was she now...? Since she had said goodbye to him in Naples he had in accordance with their arrangement heard nothing from her. He thought of the deep blue night which had swept over the waters when he had travelled alone to Genoa after that farewell, and of the soft strange fairy-like song of two children who, nestling closely up against each other and wrapped, the pair of them, in one rug, had sat on the deck by the side of their sleeping mother.

With a growing sense of well-being he walked on among the people who passed by him with all the casual nonchalance of a Sunday. Many a glad glance from a woman's eye met his own, and seemed as though it would have liked to console him for strolling about alone and with all the external appearances of mourning on this beautiful holiday afternoon. And another picture floated up in his mind. — He saw himself on a hilly sward, after a hot June day, late in the evening. Darkness all around. Deep below him a clatter of men, laughter and noise, and glittering fairy-lamps. Quite near, girls' voices came out of the darkness.... He lit the small pipe which he usually only smoked in the country; the flare of the vesta showed him two pretty young peasant wenches, still almost children. He chatted to them. They were frightened because it was so dark; they nestled up to him. Suddenly a whizz, rockets in the air, a loud "Ah!" from down below. Bengal lights flaring violet and red over the invisible lake beneath. The girls rushed down the hill and vanished. Then it became dark again and he lay alone and looked up into the darkness which swam down on him in all its sultriness. The night before the day on which his father died had been one such as this. And he thought of him for the first time to-day.

He had left the Ringstrasse and taken the direction of the Wieden. Would the Rosners be at home on such a beautiful day? At all events the distance was so short that it was worth trying, and at any rate he fancied going there rather than to Ehrenbergs'. He was not the least in love with Else, and it was almost a matter of indifference to him whether or no she were really engaged to Heinrich Bermann. He had already known her for a long time. She had been eleven, he had been fourteen when they had played tennis with each other on the Riviera. In those days she looked like a gipsy girl. Black-blue tresses tossed round her cheeks and forehead, and she was as boisterous as a boy. Her brother had already begun to play the lord, and even to-day George could not help smiling at the recollection of the fifteen-year old boy appearing on the promenade one day in a light grey coat with white black-braided gloves and a monocle in his eye. Frau Ehrenberg was then thirty-four, and had a dignified appearance though her figure was too large; she was still beautiful, had dim eyes, and was usually very tired.

George never forgot the day on which her husband, the millionaire cartridge-manufacturer, had descended on his family and had by the very fact of his appearance made a speedy end of the Ehrenbergian aristocracy. George still remembered in his mind's eye how he had sprung up during the breakfast on the hotel terrace; a small spare gentleman with a trimmed beard and moustache and Japanese eyes, in badly-creased white flannels, a dark straw hat with a red-and-white striped ribbon on his round head and with dusty black shoes. He always spoke very slowly and in an as it were sarcastic manner even about the most unimportant matters, and whenever he opened his mouth a secret anxiety would always lurk beneath the apparent calm of his wife's face. She tried to revenge herself by making fun of him; but she could never do anything with his inconsiderate manners. Oskar behaved whenever he had a chance as though he didn't belong to the family at all. A somewhat hesitating contempt would play over his features for that progenitor who was not quite worthy of him, and he would smile meaningly for sympathy at the young baron. Only Else in those days was really nice to her father. She was quite glad to hang on his arm on the promenade and she would often throw her arms round his neck before every one.

George had seen Else again in Florence a year before his mother's death. She was then taking drawing lessons from an old grizzled German, about whom the legend was circulated that he had once been celebrated. He spread the rumour about himself that when he felt his genius on the wane he had discarded his former well-known name and had given up his calling, though what that was he never disclosed. If his own version was to be believed, his downfall was due to a diabolical female who had destroyed his most important picture in a fit of jealousy; and then ended her life by jumping out of the window. This man who had struck

the seventeen-year-old George as a kind of fool and impostor was the object of Else's first infatuation. She was then fourteen years old, and had all the wildness and naïveté of childhood. When she stood in front of the Titian Venus in the Uffizi Gallery her cheeks would flush with curiosity, yearning and admiration, and vague dreams of future experiences would play in her eyes. She often came with her mother to the house which the Wergenthins had hired at Lungarno, and while Frau Ehrenberg tried in her languid blasé way to amuse the ailing baroness, Else would stand at the window with George, start precocious conversations about the art of the Pre-Raphaelites, and smile at her old childish games. Felician too would come in sometimes, slim and handsome, cast his cold grey eyes over the objects and people in the room, murmur a few polite words, sit down by his mother's bedside, and tenderly stroke and kiss her hand. He would usually soon go away again, though not without leaving behind, so far as Else was concerned, a very palpable atmosphere of old-time aristocracy, cold-blooded fascination and elegant contempt of death. She always had the impression that he was going to a gaming-table where hundreds of thousands were at stake, to a duel to the death or to a princess with red hair and a dagger on her dressing-table. George remembered that he had been somewhat jealous both of the erratic drawing-master and of his brother. The master was suddenly dismissed for reasons which were never specified, and soon afterwards Felician left for Vienna with Baron von Wergenthin. George now played to the ladies on the piano more frequently than before, both his own compositions and those of others, and Else would sing from the score easy songs from Schubert and Schumann in her small, rather shrill voice. She visited the galleries and churches with her mother and George; when spring came there were excursion parties up the Hill Road or to Fiesole, and George and Else exchanged smiling glances which were eloquent of a deeper understanding than actually existed. Their relations went on progressing in this somewhat disingenuous manner, when their acquaintance was renewed and continued in Vienna. Else seemed pleasurably thrilled all over again by the equable friendly manner with which George approached her, notwithstanding the fact that they had not seen each other for some months. She herself, on the other hand, grew outwardly more self-possessed and mentally more unsettled with each succeeding year. She had abandoned her artistic aspirations fairly early, and in the course of time she came to regard herself as destined to the most varied careers.

She often saw herself in the future as a society woman, an organiser of battles of flowers, a patroness of great balls, taking part in aristocratic charity performances; more frequently she would believe herself called to sit enthroned as a great appreciator in an artistic salon of painters, musicians and poets. She would then dream again of a more adventurous life: a sensational marriage with an American millionaire, the elopement with a violin virtuoso or a Spanish officer, a diabolical ruination of all the men who came near her. Sometimes she would think a quiet life in the country by the side of a worthy landowner the most desirable consummation; and then she would imagine herself sitting with prematurely grey hair at a simply-laid table in a circle of numerous children while she stroked the wrinkles out of the forehead of her grave husband. But George always felt that her love of comfort, which was deeper than she guessed herself, would save her from any rash step. She would often confide in George without ever being quite honest with him; for the wish which she cherished most frequently and seriously of all was to become his wife. George was well aware of this, but that was not the only reason why the latest piece of intelligence about her engagement with Heinrich Bermann struck him as somewhat incredible — this Bermann was a gaunt clean-shaven man with gloomy eyes and straight and rather too long hair, who had recently won a reputation as a writer and whose demeanour and appearance reminded George, though he could not tell why, of some fanatical Jewish teacher from the provinces; there was nothing in him which could fascinate Else particularly or even make a pleasurable appeal.

This impression was no doubt dispelled by subsequent conversation. George had left the Ehrenbergs' in company with him one evening last spring, and they had fallen into so thrilling a conversation about musical matters that they had gone on chatting till three o'clock in the morning on a seat in the Ringstrasse.

It is strange, thought George, what a lot of things are running through my mind to-day which I had scarcely thought of at all since they happened. And he felt as though he had on this autumn evening emerged out of the grievous dreary obscurity of so many weeks into the light of day at last.

He was now standing in front of the house in the Paulanergasse where the Rosners lived. He looked up to the second story. A window was open, white tulle curtains pinned together in the centre fluttered in the light breeze.

The Rosners were at home. The housemaid showed George in. Anna was sitting opposite the door, she held a coffee-cup in her hand and her eyes were turned towards the newcomer. On her right her father was reading a paper and smoking a pipe. He was clean-shaven except for a pair of narrow grizzled whiskers on his cheeks. His thin hair of a strange greenish-grey hue was parted at the temples in front and looked like a badly-made wig. His eyes were watery and red-lidded.

The stoutish mother, around whose forehead the memory of fairer years seemed as it were to hover, looked straight in front of her; her hands were contemplatively intertwined and rested on the table.

Anna slowly put down her cup, nodded and smiled in silence. The two old people began to get up when George came in.

"Please, don't trouble, please don't," said George.

Then there was a noise from the wall at the side of the room. Josef, the son of the house, got up from the sofa on which he had been lying. "Charmed to see you, Herr Baron," he said in a very deep voice, and adjusted the turned-up collar of his yellow-check rather shabby lounge jacket.

"And how have you been all this time, Herr Baron?" inquired the old man. He remained standing a gaunt and somewhat bowed figure, and refused to resume his seat until George had sat down. Josef pushed a chair between his father and sister, Anna held out her hand to the visitor.

"We haven't seen one another for a long time," she said, and drank some of her coffee.

"You've been going through a sad time," remarked Frau Rosner sympathetically.

"Yes," added Herr Rosner. "We were extremely sorry to read of your great loss — and so far as we knew your father always enjoyed the best of health."

He spoke very slowly all the time, as if he had still something more to say, stroking his head several times with his left hand, and nodded while he listened to the answer.

"Yes, it came very unexpectedly," said George gently, and looked at the faded dark-red carpet at his feet.

"A sudden death then, so to speak," remarked Herr Rosner and there was a general silence.

George took a cigarette out of his case and offered one to Josef.

"Much obliged," said Josef as he took the cigarette and bowed while he clicked his heels together without any apparent reason; while he was giving the Baron a light he thought the latter was looking at him, and said apologetically, with an even deeper voice than usual, "Office jacket."

"Office jacket straight from the office," said Anna simply without looking at her brother.

"The lady fancies she has the ironic gift," answered Josef merrily, but his manifest restraint indicated that under other conditions he would have expressed himself less agreeably.

"Sympathy was universally felt," old Rosner began again. "I read an obituary in the *Neuen Freie Presse* on your good father by Herr Hoffrat Kerner, if I remember rightly; it was highly laudatory. Science too has suffered a sad loss."

George nodded in embarrassment, and looked at his hands.

Anna began to speak about her past summer-outing. “It was awfully pretty in Weissenfeld,” she said. “The forest was just behind our house with good level roads, wasn’t it, papa? One could walk there for hours and hours without meeting a soul.”

“And did you have a piano out there?” asked George.

“Oh yes.”

“An awful affair,” observed Herr Rosner, “a thing fit to wake up the stones and drive men mad.”

“It wasn’t so bad,” said Anna.

“Good enough for the little Graubinger girl,” added Frau Rosner.

“The little Graubinger girl, you see, is the daughter of the local shopkeeper,” explained Anna: “and I taught her the elements of pianoforte, a pretty little girl with long blonde pig-tails.”

“Just a favour to the shopkeeper,” said Frau Rosner.

“Quite so, but I should like to remind you,” supplemented Anna, “that apart from that I gave real lessons, I mean paid-for ones.”

“What, also in Weissenfeld?” asked George.

“Children on a holiday. Anyway, it’s a pity, Herr Baron, that you never paid us a visit in the country. I am sure you would have liked it.”

George then remembered for the first time that he had promised Anna that he would try to pay her a visit some time in the summer on a cycling tour.

“I am sure the Baron would not have found a place like that really to his liking,” began Herr Rosner.

“Why not?” asked George.

“They don’t cater there for the requirements of a spoilt Viennese.”

“Oh, I’m not spoilt,” said George.

“Weren’t you at Auhof either?” Anna turned to George.

“Oh no,” he answered quickly. “No, I wasn’t there,” he added less sharply. “I was invited though.... Frau Ehrenberg was so kind as to... I had various invitations for the summer. But I preferred to stay in Vienna by myself.”

“I am really sorry,” said Anna, “not to see anything more of Else. You know of course that we went to the same boarding-school. Of course it’s a long time ago. I really liked her. A pity that one gets so out of touch as time goes on.”

“How is that?” asked George.

“Well, I suppose the reason is that I’m not particularly keen on the whole set.”

“Nor am I,” said Josef, who was blowing rings into the air.... “I haven’t been there for years. Putting it quite frankly... I’ve no idea, Baron, of your views on this question... I’m not very gone on Israelites.”

Herr Rosner looked up at his son. “My dear Josef, the Baron visits the house and it will strike him as rather strange....”

“I?” said George courteously. “I’m not at all on intimate terms with the Ehrenberg family, however much I enjoy talking to the two ladies.” And then he added interrogatively, “But didn’t you give singing lessons to Else last year, Fräulein Anna?”

“Yes. Or rather... I just accompanied her....”

“I suppose you’ll do so again this year?”

“I don’t know. She hasn’t shown any signs of life, so far.”

“Perhaps she’s giving it all up.”

“You think so? It would be almost better if she did,” replied Anna softly, “for as a matter of fact, it was more like squeaking than singing. But anyway,” and she threw George a look which, as it were, welcomed him afresh, “the songs you sent me are very nice. Shall I sing them to you?”

“You’ve had a look at the things already? That is nice of you.”

Anna had got up. She put both her hands on her temples and stroked her wavy hair gently, as though making it tidy. It was done fairly high, so that her figure seemed even taller than it actually was. A narrow golden watch-chain was twined twice round her bare neck, fell down over her bosom, and vanished in her grey leather belt. With an almost imperceptible nod of her head she asked George to accompany her.

He got up and said, “If you don’t mind....”

“Not at all, not at all, of course not,” said Herr Rosner. “Very kind of you, Baron, to do a little music with my daughter. Very nice, very nice.”

Anna had stepped into the next room. George followed her and left the door open. The white tulle curtains were pinned together in front of the open window and fluttered slightly. George sat down at the cottage-piano and struck a few chords. Meanwhile, Anna knelt down in front of an old black partly gilded whatnot, and got out the music. George modulated the first chords of his song. Anna joined in and sang to George’s song the Goethean words,

Deinem Blick mich zu bequemen,
Deinem Munde, deiner Brust,
Deine Stimme zu vernehmen,
War mir erst’ und letzte Lust.

She stood behind him and looked over his shoulder at the music. At times she bent a little forward, and he then felt the breath of her lips upon his temples. Her voice was much more beautiful than he remembered its having ever been before.

They were speaking rather too loudly in the next room. Without stopping singing Anna shut the door. It had been Josef who had been unable to control his voice any longer.

“I’ll just pop in to the café for a jiffy,” he said.

There was no answer. Herr Rosner drummed gently on the table and his wife nodded with apparent indifference.

“Goodbye then.” Josef turned round again at the door and said fairly resolutely: “Oh, mamma, if you’ve got a minute to spare by any chance — —”

“I’m listening,” said Frau Rosner. “It’s not a secret, I suppose.”

“No. It’s only that I’ve got a running account with you already.”

“Is it necessary to go to the café?” asked old Rosner simply, without looking up.

“It’s not a question of the café. The fact is... you can take it from me that I’d prefer myself not to have to borrow from you. But what is a man to do?”

“A man should work,” said old Rosner gently, painfully, and his eyes reddened. His wife threw a sad and reproachful look at her son.

“Well,” said Josef, unbuttoning his office coat, and then buttoning it up again— “that really is... for every single gulden-note — —”

“Pst,” said Frau Rosner with a glance towards the door, which was ajar, and through which, now that Anna had finished her song, came the muffled sound of George’s piano-playing.

Josef answered his mother's glance with a deprecatory wave of his hand. "Papa says I ought to work. As though I hadn't already proved that I can work." He saw two pairs of questioning eyes turned towards him. "Yes of course I proved it, and if it had only depended on me I'd have managed to get along all right. But I haven't got the temperament to put up with things, I'm not the kind to let myself be bullied by any chief if I happen to come in a quarter of an hour late — or anything like that."

"We know all about that," interrupted Herr Rosner wearily. "But after all, as we're already on the subject, you really must start looking round for something."

"Look round... good..." answered Josef. "But no one will persuade me to go into any business run by a Jew. It would make me the laughing-stock of all my acquaintances... of my whole set in fact."

"Your set..." said Frau Rosner. "What is your set? Café cronies?"

"Well if you don't mind, now that we are on the subject," said Josef— "it's connected with that gulden-note, too. I've got an appointment at the café now with young Jalaudek. I'd have preferred to have told you when the thing had gone quite through... but I see now that I'd better show my hand straight away. Well, Jalaudek is the son of Councillor Jalaudek the celebrated paper-merchant. And old Jalaudek is well-known as a very influential personage in the party... very intimate with the publisher of the *Christliche Volksbote*: his name is Zelltinkel. And they're looking out on the *Volksbote* for young men with good manners — Christians of course, for the advertisement business. And so I've got an appointment to-day with Jalaudek at the café, because he promised me his governor would recommend me to Zelltinkel. That would be ripping... it would get me out of my mess. Then it wouldn't be long before I was earning a hundred or a hundred and fifty gulders a month."

"O dear!" sighed old Rosner.

The bell rang outside.

Rosner looked up.

"That must be young Doctor Stauber," said Frau Rosner and cast an anxious glance at the door, through which the sound of George's piano-playing came in even softer tones than before.

"Well, mamma, what's the matter?" said Josef.

Frau Rosner took out her purse and with a sigh gave her son a silver gulden.

"Much obliged," said Josef and turned to go.

"Josef," cried Herr Rosner, "it's really rather rude — at the very minute when we have a visitor — —"

"Oh thank you, but I mustn't have all the treats."

There was a knock, Doctor Berthold Stauber came in.

"I apologise profusely, Herr Doctor," said Josef, "I'm just going out."

"Not at all," replied Doctor Stauber coldly, and Josef vanished.

Frau Rosner invited the young doctor to sit down. He took a seat on the ottoman and turned towards the quarter from which the piano-playing could be heard.

"Baron Wergenthin, the composer. Anna has just been singing," explained Frau Rosner, somewhat embarrassed. And she started to call her daughter in.

Doctor Berthold gripped her arm lightly but firmly, and said amiably: "No, please don't disturb Fräulein Anna, please don't. I'm not in the least hurry. Besides, this is a farewell visit." The latter words seemed jerked out of his throat; but Berthold nevertheless smiled courteously, leant back comfortably in his corner and stroked his short beard with his right hand.

Frau Rosner looked at him as if she were positively shocked.

"A farewell visit?" Herr Rosner asked. "Has the party allowed you to take a holiday, Herr Stauber?

Parliament has only been assembled a short time, as one sees in the papers."

"I have resigned my seat," said Berthold.

"What?" exclaimed Herr Rosner.

"Yes, resigned," repeated Berthold, and smiled nervously.

The piano-playing had suddenly stopped, the door which had been ajar was now opened. George and Anna appeared.

"Oh, Doctor Berthold," said Anna, and held out her hand to the doctor, who had immediately got up. "Have you been here long? Perhaps you heard me singing?"

"No, Fräulein, I'm sorry I was too late for that. I only caught a few notes on the piano."

"Baron Wergenthin," said Anna, as though she were introducing. "But of course you know each other?"

"Oh yes," answered George, and held out his hand to Berthold.

"The Doctor has come to pay us a farewell visit," said Frau Rosner.

"What?" exclaimed Anna in astonishment.

"I'm going on a journey, you see," said Berthold, and looked Anna in the face with a serious, impenetrable expression. "I'm giving up my political career... or rather," he added jestingly, "I'm interrupting it for a while."

George leant on the window with his arms crossed over his breast and looked sideways at Anna. She had sat down and was looking quietly at Berthold, who was standing up with his hand resting on the back of the sofa, as though he were going to make a speech.

"And where are you going?" asked Anna.

"Paris. I'm going to work in the Pasteur Institute. I'm going back to my old love, bacteriology. It's a cleaner life than politics."

It had grown darker. The faces became vague, only Berthold's forehead, which was directly opposite the window, was still bathed in light. His brows were twitching. He really has his peculiar kind of beauty, thought George, who was leaning motionless in the window-niche and felt himself bathed in a pleasant sense of peace.

The housemaid brought in the burning lamp and hung it over the table.

"But the papers," said Herr Rosner, "have no announcement at all so far of your resigning your seat, Doctor Stauber."

"That would be premature," answered Berthold. "My colleagues and the party know my intention all right, but the thing isn't official yet."

"The news is bound to create a great sensation in the circles affected by it," said Herr Rosner—"particularly after the lively debate the other day in which you showed such spirit and determination. I suppose you've read about it, Baron?" He turned to George.

"I must confess," answered George, "that I don't follow the parliamentary reports as regularly as I really ought to."

"Ought to," repeated Berthold meditatively. "There's no question of 'ought' about it really, although the session has not been uninteresting during the last few days — at any rate as a proof of how low a level a public body can sink to."

"The debate was very heated," said Herr Rosner.

"Heated?... Well, yes, what we call heated here in Austria. People were inwardly indifferent and outwardly offensive."

"What was it all about then?" inquired George.

“It was the debate arising out of the questions on the Golowski case.... Therese Golowski.”

“Therese Golowski...” repeated George. “I seem to know the name.”

“Of course you know it,” said Anna. “You know Therese herself. She was just leaving the house when you called the last time.”

“Oh yes,” said George, “one of your friends.”

“I wouldn’t go so far as to call her a friend; that seems to imply a certain mental sympathy that doesn’t quite exist.”

“You certainly don’t mean to repudiate Therese,” said Doctor Berthold smiling, but dryly.

“Oh no,” answered Anna quickly. “I really never thought of doing that. I even admire her; as a matter of fact I admire all people who are able to risk so much for something that doesn’t really concern them at all. And when a young girl does that, a pretty young girl like Therese” — she was addressing herself to George who was listening attentively— “I am all the more impressed. You know of course that Therese is one of the leaders of the Social Democratic Party?”

“And do you know what I took her for?” said George. “For a budding actress.”

“You’re quite a judge of character, Herr Baron,” said Berthold.

“She really did mean to go on the stage once,” corroborated Frau Rosner coldly.

“But just consider, Frau Rosner,” said Berthold. “What young girl is there with any imagination, especially if she lives in cramped surroundings into the bargain, who has not at some time or other in her life at any rate coquetted with such an idea.”

“Your forgiving her is good,” said Anna, smiling.

It struck Berthold too late that this remark of his had probably touched a still sensitive spot in Anna’s mind. But he continued with all the greater deliberation. “I assure you, Fräulein Anna, it would be a great pity if Therese were to go on the stage, for there’s no getting away from the fact that she can still do her party a tremendous lot of good if she isn’t torn away from her career.”

“Do you regard that as possible?” asked Anna.

“Certainly,” replied Berthold. “Therese is between two dangers, she will either talk her head off one fine day....”

“Or?” inquired George, who had grown inquisitive.

“Or she’ll marry a Baron,” finished Berthold curtly.

“I don’t quite understand,” said George deprecatingly.

“I only said ‘Baron’ for a joke, of course. Substitute Prince for Baron and I make my meaning clearer.”

“I see... I can now get some idea of what you mean, Doctor.... But how did Parliament come to bother about her?”

“Well, it’s like this, last year — at the time of the great coal-strike — Therese Golowski made a speech in some Bohemian hole, which contained an expression which was alleged to be offensive to a member of the Imperial family. She was prosecuted and acquitted. One might perhaps draw the conclusion from this that there was no particular substance in the prosecution. Anyway the State Prosecutor gave notice of appeal, there was an order for a new trial, and Therese was sentenced to two months’ imprisonment, which she is now serving, and as if that wasn’t enough the Judge who had discharged her in the Court of first instance was transferred... to somewhere on the Russian frontier, from where no one ever comes back. Well, we put a question over this business, which in my view was extremely tame. The Minister answered somewhat disingenuously amid the cheers of the so-called Constitutional parties. I ventured to reply in possibly somewhat more drastic terms than members are accustomed to use, and as the benches on the other side had

no facts with which to answer me they tried to overwhelm me by shouts and abuse. And of course you can imagine what the strongest argument was, which a certain type of Conservatives used against my points."

"Well?" queried George.

"Hold your jaw, Jew," answered Berthold with tightly compressed lips.

"Oh," said George with embarrassment, and shook his head.

"Be quiet, Jew! Hold your jaw! Jew! Jew! Shut up!" continued Berthold, who seemed somewhat to revel in the recollection.

Anna looked straight in front of her. George thought that this was quite enough. There was a short, painful silence.

"So that was why?" inquired Anna slowly.

"What do you mean?" asked Berthold.

"That's why you're resigning your seat."

Berthold shook his head and smiled. "No, not because of that."

"You are, of course, above such coarse insults, Doctor," said Herr Rosner.

"I won't go quite so far as that," answered Berthold, "but one always has to be prepared for things like that all the same. I'm resigning my seat for a different reason."

"May one ask what it is?" queried George.

Berthold looked at him with an air which was penetrating and yet distrait. He then answered courteously: "Of course you may. I went into the buffet after my speech. I met there, among others, one of the silliest and cheekiest of our democratic popular representatives, who, as he usually does, had made more row than any one else while I was speaking... Jalaudek the paper-merchant. Of course I didn't pay any attention to him. He was just putting down his empty glass. When he saw me he smiled, nodded and hailed me as cheerily as though nothing had taken place at all. 'Hallo, Doctor, won't you have a drink with me?'"

"Incredible!" exclaimed George.

"Incredible?... No, Austrian. Our indignation is as little genuine as our enthusiasm. The only things genuine with us are our malice and our hate of talent."

"Well, and what did you answer the man?" asked Anna.

"What did I answer? Nothing, of course."

"And you resigned your seat," added Anna with gentle raillery.

Berthold smiled. But at the same time his eye-brows twitched, as was his habit when he was painfully or disagreeably affected. It was too late to tell her that as a matter of fact he had come to ask her for her advice, as he used to do in the old days. And at any rate he felt sure of this, he had done wisely in cutting off all retreat as soon as he entered the room by announcing the resignation of his seat as an already accomplished fact, and his journey to Paris as directly imminent. For he now knew for certain that Anna had again escaped him, perhaps for a long time. He did not believe for a minute that any man was capable of winning her really and permanently, and it never entered his head for a minute to be jealous of that elegant young artist who was standing so quietly by the window with his crossed arms. It had happened many times before that Anna had fluttered away for a time, as though fascinated by the magic of an element which was strange to her. Why only two years ago, when she was thinking seriously of going on the stage, and had already begun to learn her parts, he had given her up for a short time as completely lost. Subsequently when she had been compelled to relinquish her artistic projects, owing to the unreliability of her voice, she seemed as if she wanted to come back to him again. But he had deliberately refused to exploit the opportunities of that period. For he wanted before he made her his wife to have won some triumph, either in science or in politics, and to have obtained

her genuine admiration. He had been well on the way to it. In the very seat where she was now sitting as she looked him straight in the face with those clear but alas! cold eyes, she had looked at the proofs of his latest medico-philosophical work which bore the title *Preliminary Observations on the Physiognomical Diagnosis of Diseases*. And then, when he finally left science for politics, at the time when he made speeches at election meetings and equipped himself for his new career by serious studies in history and political economy, she had sincerely rejoiced in his energy and his versatility.

All this was now over. She had grown to eye more and more severely those faults of his of which he was quite aware himself, and particularly his tendency to be swept away by the intoxication of his own words, with the result that he came to lose more and more of his self-confidence in his attitude towards her. He was never quite himself when he spoke to her, or in her presence. He was not satisfied with himself to-day either. He was conscious, with an irritation which struck even himself as petty, that he had not given sufficient force to his encounter with Jalaudek in the buffet, and that he ought to have made his detestation of politics ring far more plausibly.

"You are probably quite right, Fräulein Anna," he said, "if you smile at my resigning my seat on account of that silly incident. A parliamentary life without its share of comedy is an absolute impossibility. I should have realised it, played up to it and taken every opportunity of drinking with the fellow who had publicly insulted me. It would have been convenient, Austrian — and possibly even the most correct course to have taken." He felt himself in full swing again and continued with animation. "What it comes to in the end is that there are two methods of doing anything worth doing in politics. The one is a magnificent flippancy which looks on the whole of public life as an amusing game, has no true enthusiasm for anything, and no true indignation against anything, and which regards the people whose misery or happiness are ultimately at stake with consummate indifference. I have not progressed so far, and I don't know that I should ever have succeeded in doing so. Quite frankly, I have often wished I could have. The other method is this: to be ready every single minute to sacrifice one's whole existence, one's life, in the truest sense of the word, for what one believes to be right — —"

Berthold suddenly stopped. His father, old Doctor Stauber, had come in and been heartily welcomed. He shook hands with George, who had been introduced to him by Frau Rosner, and looked at him so kindly that George felt himself immediately drawn towards him. He looked younger than he was. His long reddish-yellow beard was only streaked by a few grey hairs, and his smoothly combed long hair fell in thick locks on to his broad neck. The strikingly high forehead gave a kind of majesty to the somewhat thick-set figure with its high shoulders. When his eyes were not making a special point of looking kind or shrewd they seemed to be resting behind the tired lids as though to gather the energy for the next look.

"I knew your mother, Herr Baron," he said to George rather gently.

"My mother, Herr Doctor...?"

"You will scarcely remember it, you were only a little boy of three or four at the time."

"You attended her?" asked George.

"I visited her sometimes as deputy for Professor Duchegg, whose assistant I was. You used to live then in the Habsburgergasse, in an old house that has been pulled down long ago. I could describe to you even to-day the furniture of the room in which I was received by your father... whose premature death I deeply regret.... There was a bronze figure on the secretary, a knight in armour to be sure with a flag, and a copy of a Vandyck from the Liechtenstein gallery hung on the wall."

"Yes, quite right," said George, amazed at the doctor's good memory.

"But I have interrupted your conversation," continued Doctor Stauber in that droning slightly melancholy

and yet superior tone which was peculiar to him, and sat down in the corner of the sofa.

"Doctor Berthold has just been telling us, to our great astonishment," said Herr Rosner, "that he has decided to resign his seat."

Old Stauber directed a quiet look towards his son, which the latter answered with equal quietness. George, who had watched this play of the eyes, had the impression that there prevailed between these two a tacit understanding which did not need any words.

"Yes," said Doctor Stauber. "I wasn't at all surprised. I've always felt as though Berthold were never really quite at home in Parliament, and I am really glad that he has now begun to pine as it were to go back to his real calling. Yes, yes, your real calling, Berthold," he repeated, as though to answer his son's furrowed brow. "You have not prejudiced your future by it, in the least. Nothing makes life so difficult as our frequent belief in consistency... and our wasting our time in being ashamed of a mistake, instead of owning up to it and simply starting life again on a fresh basis."

Berthold explained that he meant to leave in eight days at the outside. There would be no point in postponing his journey beyond that time, it would be possible too that he might not remain in Paris. His studies might necessitate travelling further afield. Further, he had decided not to make any farewell visits. He had, he added by way of explanation, completely given up all association with certain bourgeois sets, among whom his father had an extensive practice.

"Didn't we meet each other once this winter at Ehrenbergs'?" asked George with a certain amount of satisfaction.

"That's right," answered Berthold. "We are distantly related to the Ehrenbergs you know. The Golowski family is curiously enough the connecting link between us. It would be no good, Herr Baron, if I were to make any attempt to explain it to you in greater detail. I should have to take you on a journey through the registry offices and congregations of Temesvar Tarnopol and similar pleasant localities — and that you mightn't quite fancy."

"Anyway," added old Doctor Stauber in a resigned tone, "the Baron is bound to know that all Jews are related to one another."

George smiled amiably. As a matter of fact it rather jarred on his nerves. There was no necessity at all, in his view, for Doctor Stauber as well officially to communicate to him his membership of the Jewish community. He already knew it and bore him no grudge for it. He bore him no grudge at all for it; but why do they always begin to talk about it themselves? Wherever he went, he only met Jews who were ashamed of being Jews, or the type who were proud of it and were frightened of people thinking they were ashamed of it.

"I had a chat with old Frau Golowski yesterday," continued Doctor Stauber.

"Poor woman," said Herr Rosner.

"How is she?" asked Anna.

"How is she... you can imagine... her daughter in prison, her son a conscript — he is living in the barracks at the expense of the State... just imagine Leo Golowski as a patriot... and the old man sits in the café and watches the other people playing chess. He himself can't even run nowadays to the ten kreuzers for the chess money."

"Therese's imprisonment must soon be over anyway," said Berthold.

"It still lasts another twelve, fourteen days," replied his father.... "Come, Annerl" — he turned towards the young girl— "it would be really nice of you if you were to show yourself once more in Rembrandtstrasse; the old lady has taken an almost pathetic fancy to you. I really can't understand why," he added with a smile, while he looked at Anna almost tenderly.

She looked straight in front of her and made no answer.

The clock on the wall struck seven. George got up as though he had simply been waiting for the signal.

"Going so soon, Herr Baron?" said Herr Rosner, getting up.

George requested the company not to disturb themselves, and shook hands all round.

"It is strange," said old Stauber, "how your voice reminds one of your poor father."

"Yes, many people have said so," replied George. "I, personally, can't see any trace of it."

"There isn't a man in the world who knows his own voice," remarked old Stauber, and it sounded like the beginning of a popular lecture.

But George took his leave. Anna accompanied him, in spite of his slight remonstrance, into the hall and left the door half open — almost on purpose, so it struck George. "It's a pity we couldn't go on with our music any longer," she said.

"I'm sorry too, Fräulein Anna."

"I liked the song to-day even better than the first time, when I had to accompany myself, only it falls off a bit at the end.... I don't know how to express myself."

"Oh, I know what you mean, the end is conventional. I felt so too. I hope soon to be able to bring you something better than that, Fräulein Anna."

"But don't keep me waiting for it too long."

"I certainly won't. Goodbye, Fräulein Anna." They shook hands with each other and both smiled.

"Why didn't you come to Weissenfeld?" asked Anna lightly.

"I am really sorry, but just consider, Fräulein Anna, I could scarcely get in the mood for society of any kind this year, you can quite appreciate that."

Anna looked at him seriously. "Don't you think," she said, "that perhaps one might have been some help to you in bearing it?"

"There's a draught, Anna," called out Frau Rosner from inside.

"I'm coming in a minute," answered Anna with a touch of impatience. But Frau Rosner had already shut the door.

"When can I come back?" asked George.

"Whenever you like. At any rate... I really ought to give you a written time-table, so that you may know when I'm at home, but that wouldn't be much good either. I often go for walks or go shopping in town or go to picture galleries or exhibitions — —"

"We might do that together one day," said George.

"Oh, yes," answered Anna, took her purse out of her pocket and then took out a tiny note-book.

"What have you got there?" asked George.

Anna smiled and turned over the leaves of a little book. "Just wait.... I meant to go and see the Exhibition of Miniatures in the Royal Library at eleven on Thursday. If you too are interested in miniatures, we might meet there."

"Delighted, I'm sure."

"Right you are then, we can then arrange the next time for you to accompany my singing."

"Done," said George and shook hands with her. It struck him that while Anna was chatting with him here outside, young Doctor Stauber would doubtless be getting irritated or offended inside, and he was surprised that he should be more disturbed by this circumstance than Anna, who struck him as on the whole a perfectly good-natured person. He freed his hand from hers, said good-bye and went.

It was quite dark when George got into the streets. He strolled slowly over the Elizabeth Bridge to the

Opera, past the centre of the town and undisturbed by the hubbub and traffic around him, listened mentally to the tune of his song. He thought it strange that Anna's voice which had so pure and sound a tone in a small room, should have no future whatsoever before it on the stage and concert platform, and even stranger that Anna scarcely seemed to mind this tragic fact. But of course he was not quite clear in his mind whether Anna's calmness really reflected her true character.

He had known her more or less casually for some years, but an evening in the previous spring had been the first occasion when they had become rather more intimate. A large party had been got up on that occasion in the Waldsteingarten. They took their meal in the open air under the high chestnut-trees, and they all experienced the pleasure, excitement and fascination of the first warm May evening of the year. George conjured up in his mind all the people who had come: Frau Ehrenberg, the organiser of the party, dressed in an intentionally matronly style, in a dark loose-fitting foulard dress; Hofrat Wilt, wearing as it were the mask of an English statesman with all the sloppy aristocracy of his nonchalant demeanour, and his chronic and somewhat cheap superior manner towards everything and everybody; Frau Oberberger who looked like a rococo marquise with her grey powdered hair, her flashing eyes and her beauty spot on her chin; Demeter Stanzides with his white gleaming teeth and that pale forehead that showed all the weariness of an old race of heroes; Oskar Ehrenberg dressed with a smartness that smacked a great deal of the head clerk in a dressmaking establishment, a great deal of a young music-hall comedian and something, too, of a young society man; Sissy Wyner who kept switching her dark laughing eyes from one man to another, as though she had a merry secret understanding with every single member of the party; Willy Eissler who related in his hoarse jovial voice all kinds of jolly anecdotes of his soldier days and Jewish stories as well; Else Ehrenberg in a white English cloth dress with all the delicate melancholy of the spring flowing around her, while her *grande dame* movements combined with her baby-face and delicate figure to invest her with an almost pathetic grace; Felician, cold and courteous, with haughty eyes which gazed between the members of the party to the other tables, and from the other tables beyond into the distance; Sissy's mother, young, red-cheeked and a positive chatter-box, who wanted to talk about everything at the same time and to listen to everything at the same time; Edmund Nürnberger with his piercing eyes and his thin mouth curving into that smile of contempt (which had almost become a chronic mask) for that whirligig of life, which he thoroughly saw through, though to his own amazement he frequently discovered that he was playing in the game himself; and then finally Heinrich Bermann in a summer suit that was too loose, with a straw hat that was too cheap and a tie that was too light, who one moment spoke louder than the others and at the next moment was more noticeably silent.

Last of all Anna Rosner had appeared, self-possessed and without any escort, greeted the party with a slight nod and composedly sat down between Frau Ehrenberg and George. "I have asked her for you," said Frau Ehrenberg softly to George, who prior to this evening had scarcely given Anna a single thought. These words, which perhaps only originated in a stray idea of Frau Ehrenberg's, became true in the course of the evening. From the moment when the party got up and started on their merry expedition through the Volksprater George and Anna had remained together everywhere, in the side-shows and also on the journey home to town, which for the fun of the thing was done on foot, and surrounded though they were by all that buzz of jollity and foolishness they had finished by starting a perfectly rational conversation. A few days later he called and brought her as he had promised the piano score of "Eugen Onegin" and some of his songs; on his next visit she sang these songs over to him as well as many of Schubert's, and he was very pleased with her voice. Shortly afterwards they said goodbye to each other for the summer without a single trace of sentimentalism or tenderness. George had regarded Anna's invitation to Weissenfeld as a mere piece of

politeness, just in the same way as he had thought his promise to come had been understood; and the atmosphere of to-day's visit when compared with the innocence of their previous acquaintance was bound to strike George as extremely strange.

At the Stephansplatz George saw that he was being saluted by some one standing on the platform of a horse-omnibus. George, who was somewhat short-sighted, did not immediately recognise the man who was saluting him.

"It's me," said the gentleman on the platform.

"Oh, Herr Bermann, good evening." George shook hands with him. "Which way are you going?"

"I'm going into the Prater. I'm going to dine down there. Have you anything special on, Baron?"

"Nothing at all."

"Well, come along with me then."

George swung himself on to the omnibus, which had just begun to move on. They told each other cursorily how they had spent the summer. Heinrich had been in the Salzkammergut and subsequently in Germany, from which he had only come back a few days ago.

"Oh, in Berlin?" hazarded George.

"No."

"I thought perhaps in connection with a new piece — —"

"I haven't written a new piece," interrupted Heinrich somewhat rudely. "I was in the Taunus and on the Rhine in several places."

"What's he got to do on the Rhine?" thought George, although the topic did not interest him any further. It struck him that Bermann was looking in front of him in a manner that was not only absent-minded but really almost melancholy.

"And how's your work getting on, my dear Baron?" asked Heinrich with sudden animation, while he drew closer round him the dark grey overcoat which hung over his shoulders.[A special way of wearing a coat affected in Viennese artistic circles.] "Have you finished your quintette?"

"My quintette?" repeated George in astonishment. "Have I spoken to you about my quintette, then?"

"No, not you, but Fräulein Else told me that you were working at a quintette."

"I see, Fräulein Else. No, I haven't got much further with it. I didn't feel quite in the mood, as you can imagine."

"Quite," said Heinrich, and was silent for a while. "And your father was still so young," he added slowly.

George nodded in silence.

"How is your brother?" asked Heinrich suddenly.

"Quite well, thanks," answered George somewhat coldly.

Heinrich threw his cigarette over the rail and immediately proceeded to light another. Then he said: "You must be surprised at my inquiring after your brother when I have scarcely ever spoken to him. But he interests me. He represents in my view a type which is absolutely perfect of its kind, and I regard him as one of the happiest men going."

"That may well be," answered George hesitatingly. "But how do you come to think so seeing that you scarcely know him?"

"In the first place his name is Felician Freiherr von Wergenthin-Recco," said Heinrich very seriously, and blew the smoke into the air.

George looked at him with some astonishment.

"Of course your name is Wergenthin-Recco, too," continued Heinrich, "but only George — and that's not

the same by a long way, is it? Besides, your brother is very handsome. Of course you haven't got at all a bad appearance. But people whose real point is that they're handsome have really a much better time of it than others whose real point is that they're clever. If you are handsome you are handsome for always, while clever people, or at any rate nine-tenths of them, spend their life without showing a single trace of talent. Yes, that's certainly the case. The line of life is clearer so to speak when one is handsome than when one is a genius. Of course all this could be expressed far better."

George was disagreeably affected. What's the matter with him? he thought. Can he perhaps be jealous of Felician... on account of Else Ehrenberg?

They got out at the Praterstern. The great stream of the Sunday crowd was flowing towards them. They went towards the Hauptallee, where there was no longer any crush, and strolled slowly on. It had grown cool. George made remarks about the autumnal atmosphere of the evening, the people sitting in the restaurants, the military bands playing in the kiosks.

At first Heinrich answered offhandedly, and subsequently not at all, and finally seemed scarcely to be paying any attention. George thought this rude. He was almost sorry that he had joined Heinrich, all the more so as he made it an almost invariable practice not to respond straight away to casual invitations. The excuse he gave to himself was that it was simply out of absent-mindedness that he had done it on this occasion. Heinrich was walking close to him or even going a few steps in front, as if he were completely oblivious of George's presence. He still held tightly in both hands the overcoat which was swung round him, wore his dark grey felt hat pressed down over his forehead and looked extremely uncouth. His appearance suddenly began to jar keenly on George's nerves. Heinrich Bermann's previous remarks about Felician now struck him as in bad taste, and as quite devoid of tact, and it occurred to him at the psychological moment that practically all he knew of Heinrich's literary productions had gone against the grain. He had seen two pieces of his: one where the scene was laid in the lower strata of society, among artizans or factory workers, and which finished up with murder and fatal blows; the other a kind of satirical society comedy whose first production had occasioned a scandal and which had soon been taken out of the repertoire of the theatre. Anyway George did not then know the author personally, and had taken no further interest in the whole thing. He only remembered that Felician had thought the piece absolutely ridiculous, and that Count Schönstein had expressed the opinion that if he had anything to do with it pieces written by Jews should only be allowed to be performed by the Buda-Pesth Orpheum Company.[A company celebrated for its risqué plays] But Doctor von Breitner in particular, a baptised Jew with a philosophical mind, had given vent to his indignation that such an adventurer of a young man should have dared to have put a world on to the stage that was obviously closed to him, and which it was consequently impossible for him to know anything about.

While George was remembering all this his irritation at the rude conduct and stubborn silence of his companion rose to a genuine sense of enmity, and quite unconsciously he began to think that all the insults which had been previously directed against Bermann had been in fact justified. He now remembered too that Heinrich had been personally antipathetic to him from the beginning, and that he had indulged in some ironic remark to Frau Ehrenberg about her cleverness in having lost no time in adding that young celebrity to the tame lions in her drawing-room. Else, of course, had immediately taken Heinrich's part, and explained that he was an interesting man, was in many respects positively charming, and had prophesied to George that sooner or later he would become good friends with him. And as a matter of fact George had preserved, as the result of that nocturnal conversation on the seat in the Ringstrasse in the spring of this year, a certain sympathy for Bermann which had survived down to the present evening.

They had passed the last inns some time ago. The white high road ran by their side out into the night on a

straight and lonely track between the trees, and the very distant music only reached them in more or less broken snatches.

"But where are you going to?" Heinrich exclaimed suddenly, as though he had been dragged there against his will, and stood still.

"I really can't help it," remarked George simply.

"Excuse me," said Heinrich.

"You were so deep in thought," retorted George coolly.

"I wouldn't quite like to say 'deep.' But it often happens that one loses oneself in one's thoughts like this."

"I know," said George, somewhat reconciled.

"They were expecting you in August at Auhof," said Heinrich suddenly.

"Expected? Frau Ehrenberg was certainly kind enough to invite me, but I never accepted. Did you stay there a fairly long time, Herr Bermann?"

"A fairly long time? No. I was up there a few times, but only for an hour or so."

"I thought you stayed there."

"Not a bit of it. I stayed down at the hotel. I only occasionally went up to Auhof. There was too much noise and bustle there for me.... The house was positively packed with visitors. And I can't stand most of the people who go there."

An open fiacre in which a gentleman and lady were sitting passed by.

"Why, that was Oskar Ehrenberg," said Heinrich.

"And the lady?" queried George, looking towards something bright that gleamed through the darkness.

"Don't know her."

They turned their steps through a dark side-avenue. The conversation stuck again. Finally Heinrich began: "Fräulein Else sang a few of your songs to me at Auhof. I'd heard some of them already too, sung by the Bellini, I think."

"Yes, Bellini sang them last winter at a concert."

"Well, Fräulein Else sang those songs and some others of yours as well."

"Who accompanied her, then?"

"I myself, as well as I could. I must tell you, my dear Baron, that as a matter of fact those songs impressed me even more than when I heard them the first time at the concert, in spite of the fact that Fräulein Else has considerably less voice and technique than Fräulein Bellini. Of course one must take into consideration on the other hand that it was a magnificent summer afternoon when Fräulein Else sang your songs. The window was open, there was a view of the mountains and the deep-blue sky opposite... but anyway, you came in for a more than sufficient share of the credit."

"Very flattering," said George, who felt pained by Heinrich's sarcastic tone.

"You know," continued Heinrich, speaking as he frequently did with clenched teeth and unnecessary emphasis, "you know it is not generally my habit to invite people whom I happen to see in the street to join me in an omnibus, and I prefer to tell you at once that I regarded it as — what does one say? — a sign of fate when I suddenly caught sight of you on the Stephansplatz."

George listened to him in amazement.

"You perhaps don't remember as well as I do," continued Heinrich, "our last conversation on that seat in the Ringstrasse."

George now remembered for the first time that Heinrich had then made a quite casual allusion to the libretto of an opera on which he was busy, and that he had offered himself as the composer of the music with

equal casualness and more as a joke than anything else. He answered with deliberate coldness: “Oh yes, I remember.”

“Well, that binds you to nothing,” answered Heinrich, even more coldly than the other. “All the less so since, to tell you the truth, I’ve not given my opera libretto a single thought till that beautiful summer afternoon when Fräulein Else sang your song. Anyway, what do you say to our stopping here?”

The restaurant garden which they entered was fairly empty. Heinrich and George sat down in a little arbour next to the green wooden railing and ordered their dinner.

Heinrich leant back, stretched out his legs, looked with probing almost cynical eyes at George, who maintained an obstinate silence, and said suddenly: “I don’t think I am making a mistake if I venture to presume that you’ve not been exactly keen on the things I have done so far.”

“Oh,” answered George, blushing a little, “what makes you think that?”

“Well, I know my pieces... and I know you.”

“Me!” queried George, feeling almost insulted.

“Certainly,” replied Heinrich in a superior manner. “Besides, I have the same feeling with regard to most men, and I regard this faculty as the only indisputable one I’ve really got. All my others, I think, are fairly problematical. My so-called art in particular is more or less mediocre, and a good deal too could be said against my character. The only thing which gives me a certain amount of confidence is simply the consciousness of being able to see right into people’s souls... right deep down, every one, rogues and honest people, men, women and children, heathens, Jews and Protestants, yes, even Catholics, aristocrats and Germans, although I have heard that that is supposed to be infinitely difficult, not to say impossible, for people like myself.”

George gave a slight start. He knew that Heinrich had been subjected to the most violent personal attacks by the clerical and conservative press, particularly with reference to his last piece. “But what’s that got to do with me?” thought George. There was another one of them who had been insulted! It was really absolutely impossible to associate with these people on a neutral footing. He said politely, though coldly, with a semi-conscious recollection of old Herr Rosner’s retort to young Dr. Stauber: “I really thought that people like you were above attacks of the kind to which you’re obviously alluding.”

“Really... you thought that?” queried Heinrich, in that cold almost repulsive manner which was peculiar to him on many occasions. “Well,” he went on more gently, “that is the case sometimes. But unfortunately not always. It doesn’t need much to wake up that self-contempt which is always lying dormant within us; and once that takes place there isn’t a single rogue or a single scoundrel with whom we don’t join forces, and quite sincerely too, in attacking our own selves. Excuse me if I say ‘we.’”

“Oh, I’ve frequently felt something of the same kind myself. Of course I have not yet had the opportunity of being exposed to the public as often as you and in the same way.”

“Well, supposing you did... you would never have to go through quite what I did.”

“Why not?” queried George, slightly hurt.

Heinrich looked him sharply in the face. “You are the Baron von Wergenthin-Recco.”

“So that’s your reason! But you must remember that there are a whole lot of people going about to-day who are prejudiced against one for that very reason — and manage to cast in one’s teeth the fact of one’s being a baron whenever they get a chance.”

“Yes, yes, but I think you will agree with me that being ragged for being a baron is a very different matter than being ragged for being a ‘Jew,’ although the latter — you’ll forgive me of course — may at times denote the better aristocracy. Well, you needn’t look at me so pitifully,” he added with abrupt rudeness. “I am not

always so sensitive. I have other moods in which nothing can affect me in any way nor any person either. Then I feel simply this — what do you all know — what do you know about me....” He stopped, proudly, with a scornful look that seemed to pierce through the foliage of the arbour into the darkness. He then turned his head, looked round and said simply to George in quite a new tone: “Just look, we shall soon be the only ones left.”

“It is getting quite cold, too,” said George.

“I think we might still stroll a bit through the Prater.”

“Charmed.”

They got up and went. A fine grey cloud hung over a meadow which they passed.

“The fraud of summer doesn’t last after nightfall. It’ll soon all be over,” said Heinrich in a tone of unmitigated melancholy, while he added, as though to console himself: “Well, one will be able to work.”

They came into the Wurstelprater. The sound of music rang out from the restaurants, and some of the exuberant gaiety communicated itself to George. He felt suddenly swung out of the dismalness of an inn garden at autumn time and a somewhat painful conversation into a new world. A tout, in front of a merry-go-round, from which a gigantic hurdy-gurdy sent into the open air the pot-pourri cut of the “Troubadour” with all the effect of some fantastic organ, invited people to take a journey to London, Atzgersdorf and Australia. George remembered again the excursion in the spring with the Ehrenberg party. It was on this narrow seat inside the room that Frau Oberberger had sat with Demeter Stanzides, the lion of the evening, by her side, and had probably told him one of her incredible stories: that her mother had been the mistress of a Russian Grand Prince; that she herself had spent a night with an admirer in the Hallstadt cemetery, of course without anything happening; or that her husband, the celebrated traveller, had made conquests of seventeen women in one week in one harem at Smyrna. It was in this carriage upholstered in red velvet, with Hofrat Wilt as her *vis-à-vis*, that Else had lounged with lady-like grace, just as though she were in a carriage on Derby Day, while she yet managed to show by her manner and demeanour that, if it came to the point, she herself could be quite as childish as other persons of happier and less complex temperaments. Anna Rosner with the reins nonchalantly in her hand, looking dignified, but with a somewhat sly face, rode a white Arab; Sissy rocked about on a black horse that not only turned round in a circle with the other animals and carriages, but swung up and down as well. The boldest eyes imaginable flashed and laughed beneath the audacious *coiffure* with its gigantic black feather hat, while her white skirt fluttered and flew over her low-cut patent leather shoes and open-work stockings. Sissy’s appearance had produced so strange an effect on a couple of strangers that they called out to her a quite unambiguous invitation. There had then ensued a short mysterious interview between Willy, who immediately came on the spot, and the two somewhat embarrassed gentlemen, who first tried to save their faces by lighting fresh cigarettes with deliberate nonchalance and then suddenly vanished in the crowd.

Even the side-show with its “Illusions” and “Illuminated Pictures” had special memories for George. It was here, while Daphne was turning into a tree, that Sissy had whispered into his ear a gentle “remember” and thus called to his memory that masked ball at Ehrenberg’s at which she had lifted up her lace veil for a fleeting kiss, though presumably he had not been the only one. Then there was the hut where the whole party had had themselves photographed: the three young girls, Anna, Else and Sissy in the pose of classical goddesses and the men at their feet with ecstatic eyes, so that the whole thing looked like the climax of a transformation scene. And while George was thinking of these little episodes there floated up through his memory the way in which he and Anna had said goodbye to-day, and it seemed full of the most pleasant promise.

A striking number of people stood in front of an open shooting gallery. Now the drummer was hit in the heart and beat quick strokes upon his drum, now the glass ball which was dancing to and fro upon a jet of water broke with a slight click, now a *vivandière* hastily put her trumpet to her mouth and blew a menacing blast, now a little railway thundered out of a door which had sprung open, whizzed over a flying bridge and was swallowed up by another door.

When the crowd began to thin, George and Heinrich made their way to the front and recognised that the good shots were Oskar Ehrenberg and his lady friend. Oskar was just aiming his gun at an eagle which was moving up and down near the ceiling with outstretched wings, and missed for the first time. He laid his weapon down in indignation, gazed round him, saw the two gentlemen behind him and saluted them.

The young lady with her cheek resting on her gun threw a fleeting glance at the new arrivals, then aimed again with great keenness, and pressed the trigger. The eagle drooped its hit wings and did not move any more.

"Bravo," shouted Oskar.

The lady laid the weapon before her on the table. "That's my little lot," she said to the boy who wanted to load again. "I've won."

"How many shots were there?" asked Oskar.

"Forty," answered the boy, "that's eighty kreuzers." Oskar put his hand into his waistcoat pocket, threw a silver gulden down and received with condescension the thanks of the loading boy. "Allow me," he then said, while he placed both his hands on his hips, moved the top of his body slightly in front and put his left foot forward, "Allow me, Amy, to introduce the gentlemen who witnessed your triumph, Baron Wergenthin, Herr von Bermann... Fräulein Amelie Reiter."

The gentlemen lifted their hats, Amelie returned the greeting by nodding a few times with her head. She wore a simple foulard dress designed in white, and over it a light cloak of bright yellow bordered with lace and a black but extremely lively hat.

"I know Herr von Bermann already," she said. She turned towards him. "I saw you at the first night of your play last winter, when you came on the stage to bow your acknowledgments. I enjoyed myself very much. Don't think I am saying this as a mere compliment."

Heinrich thanked her sincerely.

They walked on further between side-shows which were growing quieter and quieter, past inn gardens which were gradually becoming empty.

Oskar thrust his right arm through his companion's left and then turned to George. "Why didn't you come to Auhof this year? We were all very sorry."

"Unfortunately I didn't feel much in the mood for society."

"Of course, I can quite understand," said Oskar with all proper seriousness. "I was only there myself for a few weeks. In August I strengthened my tired limbs in the waves of the North Sea; I was in the Isle of Wight, you know."

"That must be very nice," said George. "Who is it that always goes there?"

"You're thinking of the Wyners," replied Oskar. "When they used to live in London they went there regularly, but now they only go there every two or three years."

"But they've kept the Y for Austrian consumption as well," said George with a smile.

Oskar was serious. "Old Herr Wyner," he answered, "honestly earned his right to the Y. He went to England in his thirteenth year, became naturalised there and was made a partner when quite a young man in the great steel manufacturing concern which is still called Black & Wyner."

“At any rate he got his wife from Vienna.”

“Yes, and when he died seven or eight years ago she came over here with her two children, but James will never get acclimatised here.... Lord Antinous, you know, that’s what Frau Oberberger calls him. He is now back at Cambridge again where strangely enough he is studying Greek scholarship. Demeter was a few days in Ventnor, too.”

“Stanzides?” added George.

“Do you know Herr von Stanzides, Herr Baron?” asked Amy.

“Oh yes.”

“Then he does really exist?” she exclaimed.

“Yes, but just you listen,” said Oskar. “She put a lot of money on him this spring at Freudenau, and won a lot of money, and now she inquires if he really exists.”

“What makes you have doubts about Stanzides’ existence, Fräulein?” asked George.

“Well, you know, whenever I don’t know where he is — Oskar, I mean — it’s always a case of ‘I’ve an appointment with Stanzides’ or ‘I’m riding with Stanzides in the Prater.’ Stanzides this and Stanzides that, why it sounds more like an excuse than a name.”

“You be quiet now, will you?” said Oskar gently.

“Not only does Stanzides exist,” explained George, “but he has the most beautiful black moustache and the most fiery black eyes that are to be found anywhere.”

“That’s quite possible, but when I saw him he looked more like a jack-in-the-box, yellow jacket, green cap, violet sleeves.”

“And she won forty gulden on him,” added Oskar facetiously.

“And where are the forty gulden?” sighed Fräulein Amelie.... Then she suddenly stood still and exclaimed: “But I’ve never yet been on it.”

“Well, that can be remedied,” said Oskar simply.

The Great Wheel was turning slowly and majestically in front of them with its lighted carriages. The young people passed the turnstile, climbed into an empty compartment and swept upwards.

“Do you know, George, whom I got to know this summer?” said Oskar. “The Prince of Guastalla.”

“Which one?” asked George.

“The youngest, of course, Karl Friedrich. He was there incognito. He’s very thick with Stanzides, an extraordinary man. You take my word for it,” he added softly, “if people like us said one hundredth part of the things the prince says, we’d never get out of prison our whole life long.”

“Look, Oskar,” cried Amy, “at the tables and the people down there. It looks just like a little box, doesn’t it? And that mass of lights over there, far off. I’m sure that’s going to Prague, don’t you think so, Herr Bermann?”

“Possibly,” answered Heinrich, knitting his forehead as he stared through the glass wall out into the night.

When they left the compartment and got out into the open air the Sunday hubbub was subsiding.

“Poor little girl,” said Oskar Ehrenberg to George, while Amy went on in front with Heinrich, “she has no idea that this is the last time we are going out together in the Prater.”

“But why the last time?” asked George, not feeling particularly interested.

“It’s got to be,” replied Oskar. “Things like this oughtn’t to last longer than a year at the outside. Any way, you might buy your gloves from her after December,” he added brightly, though with a certain touch of melancholy. “I am setting her up, you know, in a little business. I more or less owe her that, for I took her away from a fairly safe situation.”

"A safe one?"

"Yes, she was engaged, to a case-maker. Did you know that there were such people?"

In the meanwhile Amy and Heinrich were standing in front of a narrow moving staircase that went boldly up to a platform and waited for the others. All agreed that they ought not to leave the Prater before going for a ride on the switchback.

They whizzed through the darkness down and up again in the groaning coach under the black tree-tops; and George managed to discover a grotesque motif in 3/4 time in the heavy rhythmic noise.

While he was going down the moving staircase with the others, he knew that the melody should be introduced by an oboe and clarionet and accompanied by a cello and contra bass. It was clearly a *scherzo* probably for a symphony.

"If I were a capitalist," expounded Heinrich with emphasis, "I would have a switchback built four miles long to go over fields and hills, through forests and dancing-halls; I would also see that there were surprises on the way." Anyway, he thought that the time had come to develop more elaborately the fantastic element in the Wurstelprater. He himself, he informed them, had a rough idea for a merry-go-round that by means of some marvellous machinery was to revolve spiral-fashion above the ground, winding higher and higher till eventually it reached the top of a kind of tower.

Unfortunately he lacked the necessary technical knowledge to explain it in greater detail. As they went on he invented burlesque figures and groups for the shooting galleries, and finally declared that there was a pressing need for a magnificent Punch and Judy show for which original authors should write pieces at once profound and frivolous.

In this way they came to the end of the Prater where Oskar's carriage was waiting. Squashed, but none the less good-tempered, they drove to a wine-restaurant in the town. Oskar ordered champagne in a private room, George sat down by the piano and improvised the theme that had occurred to him on the switchback. Amy lounged back in the corner of the sofa, while Oskar kept whispering things into her ears which made her laugh. Heinrich had grown silent again and twirled his glass slowly between his fingers. Suddenly George stopped playing and let his hands lie on the keys. A feeling of the dreamlike and purposeless character of existence came over him, as it frequently did when he had drunk wine. Ages seemed to have passed since he had come down a badly-lighted staircase in the Paulanergasse, and his walk with Heinrich in the dark autumn avenue lay far away in the distant past. On the other hand he suddenly remembered, as vividly as though the whole thing had happened yesterday, a very young and very depraved individual, with whom he had spent many years ago a few weeks of that happy-go-lucky life which Oskar Ehrenberg was now leading with Amy. She had kept him waiting too long one evening in the street, he had gone away impatiently and had neither heard nor seen anything of her again. How easy life was sometimes....

He heard Amy's soft laugh and turned round. His look encountered that of Oskar, who seemed to be trying to catch his eye over Amy's blonde head. He felt irritated by that look and deliberately avoided it and struck a few chords again in a melancholy ballad-style. He felt a desire to describe all that had happened to him to-day, and looked at the clock over the door. It was past one. He caught Heinrich's eye and they both got up. Oskar pointed to Amy, who had gone to sleep on his shoulder, and intimated by a smile and a shrug of his shoulders that under such circumstances he could not think of going for the present. The two others shook hands with him, whispered good-night and slipped away.

"Do you know what I've done?" said Heinrich. "While you were improvising so extraordinarily finely on that ghastly piano I tried to get the real hang of that libretto that I spoke to you about in the spring."

"Oh, the opera libretto! that *is* interesting. Won't you tell me?"

Heinrich shook his head. “I should like to, but the unfortunate thing is, as you’ve already seen, that it’s really not yet finished — like most of my other so-called plots.”

George looked at him interrogatively. “You had a whole lot of things on hand last spring, when we saw each other last.”

“Yes, I have made a lot of notes, but to-day I’ve done nothing more than sentences... no words, no, just letters on white paper. It’s just as if a dead hand had touched everything. I’m frightened the next time I tackle the thing that it will all fall to pieces like tinder. Yes, I’ve been going through a bad time, and who knows if there’s a better one in store for me?”

George was silent. Then he suddenly remembered the notice in the papers which he had read somewhere or other about Heinrich’s father, the former deputy, Doctor Bermann. He suspected that that might be the reason. “Your father is ill, isn’t he?” he asked.

Heinrich answered without looking at him. “Yes, my father has been in a mental home since June.”

George shook his head sympathetically.

Heinrich continued: “Yes, it’s an awful business, even though I wasn’t on very intimate terms with him during the last months it is indescribably awful, and goes on being so.”

“I can quite understand,” said George, “not making any headway with one’s work under circumstances like that.”

“Yes,” answered Heinrich hesitatingly. “But it’s not that alone. To be quite frank that business plays a comparatively subordinate part in my present mental condition. I don’t want to make myself out better than I am. Better...! Should I be better...!” He gave a short laugh and then went on speaking. “Look here, yesterday I still thought that it was the accumulation of every possible misfortune that depressed me so. But to-day I’ve had an infallible proof that things of no importance at all, positively silly things in fact, affect me more deeply than very real things like my father’s illness. Disgusting, isn’t it?”

George looked in front of him. Why do I still go on walking with him, he thought, and why does he take it quite for granted that I should?

Heinrich went on speaking with clenched teeth and unnecessary vehemence of tone. “I received two letters this afternoon. Two letters, yes... one from my mother, who had visited my father yesterday in the home. This letter contained the news that he is bad — very bad; to come to the point he won’t last much longer” — he gave a deep breath— “and as you can imagine that involves all kinds of troubles, responsibilities for my mother and my sister and for myself. But just think of it, another letter came at the same time as that one; it contained nothing of importance so to speak — a letter from a person with whom I have been intimate for two years — and there was a passage in that letter which struck me as a little suspicious — one isolated passage... otherwise the letter was very affectionate and very nice, like all her other letters... and now, just imagine, the memory of that one suspicious passage, which another man wouldn’t have noticed at all, has been haunting me and torturing me the whole day. I’ve not been thinking about my father in the lunatic asylum, nor about my mother and sister who are in despair, but only about that unimportant passage in that silly letter from a really by no means brilliant female. It eats up all my strength, it makes me incapable of feeling like a son, like a human being... isn’t it ghastly?”

George listened coldly. It struck him as strange that this taciturn melancholy man should suddenly confide in so casual an acquaintance as himself, and he could not help feeling a painful sense of embarrassment when confronted with this unexpected revelation. He did not have the impression either that any particular sympathy for him on Heinrich’s part was the real reason for all these confessions. He rather felt inclined to put it down to a want of tact, a certain natural lack of self-control, something which seemed very well

described by the expression “bad breeding,” which he had once heard applied to Heinrich — wasn’t it by Hofrat Wilt? They went as far as the Burg gate. A starless sky lay over the silent town, there was a slight rustle in the trees of the park, they could hear somewhere or other the noise of a rolling carriage as it drove away into the distance.

As Heinrich was silent again, George stood still and said in as kind a tone as he could: “I must now really say good-bye, dear Herr Bermann.”

“Oh,” exclaimed Heinrich, “I now see that you’ve come with me quite a long way — and I’ve been tactless enough to tell you, or rather myself in your presence, a lot of things which can’t interest you in the least.... Forgive me!”

“What is there to forgive?” answered George gently. He felt a little moved by this self-reproach of Heinrich’s and held out his hand.

Heinrich took it, said “Good-bye, my dear Baron,” and rushed off in a hurry, as though he had suddenly decided that any further word would be bound to be importunate.

George looked after him with a mixture of sympathy and repulsion, and suddenly a free and almost happy mood came over him. He felt young, devoid of care and destined for the most brilliant future. He rejoiced at the winter which was coming, there were all kinds of possibilities: work, amusement, sentiment, while he was absolutely indifferent as to who it was from whom these joys might come. He lingered a moment by the Opera-house. If he went home through the Paulanergasse it would not be appreciably out of his way. He smiled at the memory of the serenades of his earlier years. Not far from here lay the street where he had looked up many a night at a window behind whose curtains Marianne had been accustomed to show herself when her husband had gone to sleep. This woman who was always playing with dangers in whose seriousness she herself did not believe had never really been worthy of George.... Another memory more distant than this one was much more gracious. When he was a boy of seventeen in Florence he had walked to and fro many a night before the window of a beautiful girl, the first creature of the other sex who had given her virgin self to him as yet untouched. And he thought of the hour when he had seen his beloved step on the arm of her bridegroom up to the altar, where the priest was to consecrate the marriage, of the look of eternal farewell which she had sent to him from under her white veil....

He had now arrived at his goal. The lamps were still burning at both ends of the short street, so that it was quite dark where he stood opposite the house. The window of Anna’s room was open, and the pinned curtains fluttered lightly in the wind, just as in the afternoon. It was quite dark below. A soft tenderness began to stir in George’s heart. Of all the beings who had ever refrained from hiding their inclination for him he thought Anna the best and the purest. She was also the first who brought the gift of sympathy for his artistic aspirations. She was certainly more genuine than Marianne, whose tears would roll over her cheeks whatever he happened to play on the piano; she was deeper too than Else Ehrenberg, who no doubt only wanted to confirm herself in the proud consciousness of having been the first to recognise his talent. And if any person was positively cut out to counteract his tendency to dilettantism and nonchalance and to keep him working energetically, profitably and with a conscious object that person was Anna. He had thought only last winter of looking out for a post as a conductor or accompanist at some German Opera; at Ehrenbergs’ he had casually spoken of his intentions, which had not been taken very seriously. Frau Ehrenberg, woman of the world that she was, had given him the motherly advice rather to undertake a tour through the United States as a composer and conductor, whereupon Else had cut in, “And an American heiress shouldn’t be sniffed at either.” As he remembered this conversation he was very pleased with the idea of knocking about the world a bit, he wished to get to know foreign towns and foreign men, to win love and fame somewhere out in the

wide world, and finally came to the conclusion that his life was slipping away from him on the whole in far too quiet and monotonous a fashion.

He had long ago left the Paulanergasse, without having taken mentally any farewell of Anna, and was soon home.

As he stepped into the dining-room he saw a light shining from Felician's room.

"Good evening, Felician," he cried out.

The door was opened and Felician came out still fully dressed.

The brothers shook hands with each other.

"Only just got home?" said Felician. "I thought you had been asleep quite a long time." As he spoke he looked past him, as his manner was, and nodded his head towards the right. "What have you been doing, then?"

"I've been in the Prater," answered George.

"Alone?"

"No, I met people. Oskar Ehrenberg with his girl and Bermann the author. We shot and went on the switchback. It was quite jolly.... What have you got in your hand?" he said, interrupting his narrative. "Have you been out for a walk like that?" he added jestingly.

Felician let the sword which he held in his right hand shine in the light of the lamp. "I've just taken it down from the wall, I begin to-morrow again in earnest. The tournament is in the middle of November, and I want to try what I can do this year against Forestier."

"By Jove!" cried George.

"A piece of cheek, you think, what? But it's still a long time before the middle of November. And the strange thing is I've got the feeling as though I had learnt something fresh in the very six weeks of this summer when I didn't have the thing in my hand at all. It's as though my arm had got new ideas in the meanwhile. I can't explain it properly."

"I follow what you mean."

Felician held the sword stretched out in front of him and looked at it affectionately. He then said: "Ralph inquired after you, so did Guido... a pity you weren't there."

"You spent the whole day with them?"

"Oh no, I remained at home after dinner. You must have gone out straight away. I've been studying."

"Studying?"

"Yes, I must really do something serious now. I want to pass my Diplomatic exam, by May at the outside."

"So you've quite made up your mind?"

"Absolutely. There's no point in my remaining on any more in the Stadthalterei. The longer I stay there the clearer it becomes. Anyway, the time won't have been wasted. They don't mind at all if one has spent a year or two in Home Service."

"So you'll probably be leaving Vienna in the autumn."

"Presumably."

"And where will they send you?"

"If one only knew."

George looked in front of him. "So the parting is as near as that?" But why did it affect him so much all of a sudden?... Why, he himself had determined to go away, and had quite recently spoken to his brother about his plans for next year. Was he still as sceptical as ever of his seriousness? If only they could have a good frank brotherly heart-to-heart talk as they had had on that evening after their father's funeral. As a matter of

fact, it was only when life revealed its gloomy side to them that they felt absolutely in touch. Otherwise there was always this strange constraint between them both. There was obviously no help for it. They just had to talk more or less discreetly to each other like fairly intimate friends. And as though resigned to the situation George went on with his questions. “What did you do in the evening?”

“I had supper with Guido and an interesting young lady.”

“Really?”

“He’s in silken dalliance again, you know.”

“Who is it, then?”

“Conservatoire, Jewess, violin. But she didn’t bring it with her. Not particularly pretty, but clever. She improves him and he respects her; he wants her to be baptised. A humorous affair I can tell you. You would have had quite a good time.”

George turned his eyes towards the sword which Felician still held in his hand. “Would you like to fence a bit?” he asked.

“Why not?” answered Felician and fetched a second foil out of his room. Meanwhile George had moved the big table in the middle up against the wall.

“I haven’t had a thing in my hand since May,” he said as he took hold of his sword. They took off their coats and crossed blades. George cried *touché* the next second.

“Come on,” cried George, and thought himself lucky that it was his brother whom he had to face as he stood in an awkward position with the slender flashing weapon in his hand.

Felician hit him as often as he wanted to without himself being touched a single time. He then lowered his sword and said: “You’re too tired to-day, there’s no point in it. But you should come more often to the club. I assure you it’s a pity, with your talent.”

George was pleased by his brotherly praise. He laid his sword down on the table, took a deep breath and went to the wide centre window which was open. “What wonderful air,” he said. A lonely lamp was shining from the park, there was absolute silence.

Felician came up to George, and while the latter leant with both hands on the sill the elder brother remained upright and swept over street, park and town with one of his proud quiet glances. They were both silent for a long time. And they knew they were each thinking of the same thing: a May night of last spring when they had gone home together through the park and their father had greeted them with a silent nod of his head from the very same window by which they were now standing. And both felt a little shocked at the thought that they had enjoyed the whole day with such full gusto, without any painful memories of the beloved man who now lay beneath the ground.

“Well, good-night,” said Felician in a softer tone than usual as he held out his hand to George. He pressed it in silence and each went into his own room.

George arranged the table lamp, took out some music paper and began to write. It was not the scherzo which had occurred to him when he had whizzed through the night with the others under the black tree-tops a few hours ago; and it was not the melancholy folk-ballad of the restaurant either; but a quite new *motif* that swam up slowly and continuously as though from secret depths. George felt as though he had to allow some mysterious element to take its course. He wrote down the melody, which he thought should be sung by an *alto* voice or played on the viola, and at the same time a strange accompaniment rang in his ears, which he knew would never vanish from his memory.

It was four o’clock in the morning when he went to bed with the calmness of a man to whom nothing evil can ever come in all his life and for whom neither solitude nor poverty nor death possess any terror.

II



FRAU EHRENBERG SAT with her knitting on the green velvet sofa in the raised bow-window. Opposite her Else was reading a book. The white head of the marble Isis gleamed from out the far dark part of the room behind the piano, while a streak of light from the next room played through the open door over the grey carpet. Else looked up from her book through the window to the high tops of the trees in the Schwarzenberg Park which were waving in the autumn wind and said casually: "We might perhaps ring up George Wergenthin, to know if he's coming this evening."

Frau Ehrenberg let her knitting fall on her lap. "I don't know," she said. "You remember what a really charming condolence letter I wrote him and what a pressing invitation I gave him to come to Auhof. He didn't come and the coldness of his answer was quite marked. I wouldn't ring him up."

"One shouldn't treat him like other people," answered Else. "He belongs to the people whom one has occasionally to remind that one is still alive. When he has been reminded he is extremely glad."

Frau Ehrenberg went on with her knitting. "It really won't come to anything," she said quietly.

"It's not meant to come to anything," retorted Else. "I thought you knew that by this time, mamma. We're good friends, nothing more — and even that only at intervals; or do you really think that I'm in love with him, mamma? Yes, when I was a little girl I was, in Nice, when we played tennis together, but that is long past."

"Well — and Florence?"

"In Florence — I was more in love with Felician."

"And now?" asked Frau Ehrenberg slowly.

"Now... you're probably thinking of Heinrich Bermann... but you're making a mistake, mother."

"I prefer to be making a mistake. But this summer I really quite had the impression that — —"

"I tell you," interrupted Else a little impatiently, "it isn't anything and never was anything. On one solitary occasion, when we went out boating on a sultry afternoon, you saw us from your balcony with your opera-glasses, no doubt — it was only then that it became a little dangerous. And even supposing we had fallen on each other's neck — which as a matter of fact we never did — it wouldn't have meant anything. It was simply a summer flirtation."

"And besides, he's supposed to be involved in a very serious love-affair," said Frau Ehrenberg.

"You mean... with that actress, mamma?"

Frau Ehrenberg looked up. "Did he tell you anything about her?"

"Tell...? Not in so many words, but when we went for walks together in the park or went out in the evening on the lake, why, he practically spoke of nothing but her — of course without mentioning her name... and the better he liked me — men really are such awfully funny people — the more jealous he became about the other woman.... But if it were only that? What young man isn't involved in a serious love affair? Do you think by any chance, mamma, that George Wergenthin is not?"

"In a serious one... no, that will never happen to him. He's too cold, too superior for that... he hasn't got enough temperament."

"That's exactly why," explained Else, airing her knowledge of human nature. "He'll slip into some whirlpool or other and get taken out of his depth without his having noticed it, and some fine day he'll get married... out of sheer indolence... to some person or other who'll probably be absolutely indifferent to him."

“You must have a definite suspicion,” said Frau Ehrenberg.

“I have.”

“Marianne?”

“Marianne! but that’s been over a long time, mamma. And that was never anything particularly serious, either.”

“Well, who is it then?”

“Well whom do you think, mamma?”

“I have no idea.”

“It’s Anna,” said Else curtly.

“Which Anna?”

“Anna Rosner, of course.”

“But....”

“You can say ‘but’ as much as you like — it’s a fact.”

“Else, you don’t seriously think that Anna with her reserved character could so far forget herself as to — —”

“So far forget herself...? Really, mamma, the number of expressions you keep on using — anyway, I don’t think that’s quite a case of one’s forgetting oneself.”

Frau Ehrenberg smiled, not without a certain pride.

The bell rang outside.

“It’s he at last,” said Else.

“It might quite as well be Demeter Stanzides,” observed Frau Ehrenberg.

“Stanzides was to bring the Prince along sometime,” said Else casually.

“Do you think that will come off?” inquired Frau Ehrenberg, letting her knitting fall into her lap.

“Why shouldn’t it come off?” said Else. “They are so intimate.”

The door opened. As a matter of fact it was none of the expected visitors who came in, but Edmund Nürnberger. He was dressed, as always, with the greatest care, though not after the latest fashion. His tail coat was a little too short and an emerald pin was stuck in his voluminous satin tie. He bowed as soon as he had got to the door, though his demeanour expressed at the same time a certain irony at his own politeness. “Am I the first?” he inquired. “No one here yet? Not a Hofrat — nor a count — nor an author — nor a diabolical female?”

“Only a woman who never was one, I’m sorry to say,” answered Frau Ehrenberg as she shook hands with him.

“And one... who will perhaps become one sometime.”

“Oh, I am convinced,” said Nürnberger, “that if she only takes it seriously, Fräulein Else will succeed in that.” He stroked his smooth black somewhat glossy hair slowly with his left hand.

Frau Ehrenberg expressed her regret that their expectation of his coming to Auhof had not been realised. Had he really spent the whole summer in Vienna?

“Why do you wonder so much, my dear madam? Whether I am walking up and down among mountain scenery or by the shore of the sea or in my own room, it doesn’t really matter much in the end.”

“But you must have felt quite lonely,” said Frau Ehrenberg.

“You certainly realise solitude more clearly when there’s no one in the neighbourhood who shows any desire of talking to you.... But let’s talk of more interesting and promising men than I am. How are all the numerous friends of your popular family?”

“Friends!” repeated Else. “I should like first to know what you mean by the word?”

“Well, all the people who say something agreeable to you from whatever motive, and whom you believe in when they say it.”

The door of the bedroom opened, Herr Ehrenberg appeared and greeted Nürnberger.

“Are you ready packed?” asked Else.

“Packed and ready,” answered Ehrenberg, who had on a grey suit that was far too loose and was biting a fat cigar between his teeth. He turned to Nürnberger to explain.... “I’m off to-day, just as I am, to Corfu... for the time being; the season is beginning and the Ehrenberg ‘at homes’ make me feel sick.”

“No one asks you,” replied Frau Ehrenberg gently, “to honour them with your presence.”

“Cute answer, eh,” said Ehrenberg, puffing at his cigar. “I don’t mind, of course, staying away from your real ‘at homes.’ But when I’d like to dine quietly at home on a Thursday and there’s an attaché sitting in one corner and a hussar in the other, and some one over there is playing his own compositions and some one else on the sofa is being funny, while by the window Frau Oberberger is fixing up an assignation with any one who happens to come along... well, it really gets on my nerves. One can stand it once, but not a second time.”

“Do you think you’ll remain away all the winter?” asked Nürnberger.

“It’s possible. I intend, you know, to go further, to Egypt, to Syria, probably to Palestine as well. Yes, it’s perhaps only because one’s getting older, perhaps because one reads so much about Zionism and so forth, but I can’t help it, I should like to see Jerusalem before I die.”

Frau Ehrenberg shrugged her shoulders.

“Those are matters,” said Ehrenberg, “which my wife don’t understand — and my children even less so. What do you know about it, Else? no, you don’t know anything either. But when one reads what’s going on in the world it often makes one inclined to think that there’s no other way out for us.”

“For us?” repeated Nürnberger. “I’ve not observed up to the present that Anti-Semitism has done you any particular harm.”

“You mean because I’ve grown a rich man? Well if I were to tell you that I don’t give any shakes for money, you would, of course, not believe me, and quite right too. But as sure as you see me here, I swear to you that I would give half my fortune to see the worst of our enemies on the gallows.”

“I’m only afraid,” remarked Nürnberger, “that you would have the wrong ones hanged.”

“There’s not much danger,” replied Ehrenberg. “Even if you don’t catch the man you’re after, the man you do catch is bound to be one of them, too, right enough.”

“This is not the first time, my dear Herr Ehrenberg, that I observe that your standpoint towards this question is not ideally objective.”

Ehrenberg suddenly bit through his cigar and with fingers shaking with rage put it on the ash-tray. “If any one here’s to tell me... and even... excuse me... or perhaps you’re baptised...? One can really never tell nowadays.”

“I’m not baptised,” replied Nürnberger quietly. “But on the other hand I am certainly not a Jew either. I’ve ceased to belong to the congregation for a long time, for the simple reason that I never felt myself to be a Jew.”

“If some one were to bash in your top hat in the Ringstrasse because, if you will allow me to say so, you have a somewhat Jewish nose, you’d realise pretty quick that you were insulted because you were a Yiddisher fellow. You take my word for it.”

“But, papa, how excited you are getting,” said Else, and stroked him on his bald reddish shiny head.

Old Ehrenberg took her hand, stroked it and asked, apparently without any connection with what he had

been saying before: “By-the-bye, shall I have the pleasure of seeing my son and heir before I leave?”

Frau Ehrenberg answered: “Oskar’s bound to be home soon.”

Ehrenberg turned to Nürnberger. “You will doubtless be glad to know that my son Oskar is an Anti-Semite as well.”

Frau Ehrenberg sighed gently. “It’s a fixed idea of his,” she said to Nürnberger. “He sees Anti-Semites everywhere, even in his own family.”

“That is the latest Jewish national disease,” said Nürnberger. “I myself have only succeeded up to the present in making the acquaintance of one genuine Anti-Semite. I’m afraid I am bound to admit, dear Herr Ehrenberg, that it was a well-known Zionist leader.”

Ehrenberg could only make an eloquent gesture.

Demeter Stanzides and Willy Eissler came in and immediately spread an atmosphere of vivid brilliancy around them. Demeter wore his uniform lightly and magnificently, as though it were a fancy costume rather than a military dress; Willy stood there in a dinner jacket looking tall and pale and as if he had been keeping late hours, and then immediately gathered up the reins of the conversation, while his pleasantly hoarse voice rasped through the air with amiable imperiousness.

He gave an account of the preparations for an aristocratic theatrical performance in which he was adviser, producer and actor, just as he had been last year, and described a meeting of the young lords, where, if his account was to be believed, every one had behaved as though they were in a lunatic asylum, and then went on to treat them to a humorous dialogue between two countesses whose mannerisms he managed to take off in a most delightful way. Ehrenberg was always very amused by Willy Eissler. The vague feeling that this Hungarian Jew managed somehow or other to outwit and make a fool of that whole feudal set, whom personally he hated so much, filled him with respect for the young man.

Else sat at the little table in the corner with Demeter and made him tell her about the *Isle of Wight*. “You were there with your friend?” she inquired, “weren’t you, Prince Karl Friedrich?”

“My friend the Prince?... that’s not quite right, Fräulein Else. The Prince has no friends, nor have I. We’re neither of us the type to have friends.”

“He must be an interesting man according to all one hears.”

“Interesting — I don’t know about that. At any rate he’s thought over a lot of things which people in his position are not usually accustomed to bother their heads about very much. Perhaps he’d have managed to do all kinds of things too, if he’d been left to himself. Well, who knows, it was perhaps better for him that they kept a tight hold on him, for him and for the country too in the long run. One man alone can do nothing — never in this life. That’s why it’s best to let matters slide and get out of things, as he did.”

Else looked at him somewhat coldly. “You’re so philosophical to-day, what is it? It seems to me that Willy Eissler has spoilt you.”

“Willy spoilt me?”

“Yes, you know you shouldn’t associate with such clever people.”

“Why not?”

“You should simply be young, shine, live, and then when there’s nothing more to do, do whatever you like... but without bothering about yourself and the world.”

“You should have told me that before, Fräulein Else; once a man’s started getting clever....”

Else shook her head. “But perhaps in your case it might have been avoided,” she said quite seriously. And then they both had to laugh.

The chandelier was lighted up. George Wergenthin and Heinrich Bermann had come in. Invited by a smile

George sat down by Else's side.

"I knew that you would come," she said disingenuously but warmly as she pressed his hand; she was more glad than she thought she would have been that he should sit opposite to her after so long an interval, that she could see again his proud gracious face and hear again his somewhat gentle yet warm voice.

Frau Wyner appeared, a little woman with a high colour, jolly and awkward. Her daughter Sissy was with her. The groups got broken up in the "general post" of mutual greetings.

"Well, have you composed that song for me yet?" Sissy asked George with laughing eyes and laughing lips, as she played with one of her gloves and moved about like a snake in her dark-green shimmering dress.

"A song?" asked George. He really didn't remember.

"Or waltz or something. But you promised me to dedicate something to me." While she spoke her looks were wandering round. They glowed into the eyes of Willy, passed caressingly by Demeter and addressed a sphinx-like question to Heinrich Bermann. It seemed as though will-o'-the-wisps were dancing through the drawing-room.

Frau Wyner suddenly came up to her daughter. She flushed deeply. "Sissy is really so silly.... What are you thinking of, Sissy? Baron George has had more important things to do this year than to compose things for you."

"Oh not at all," said George politely.

"You buried your father, that's no trifle."

George looked straight in front of him.

But Frau Wyner went on speaking quite unperturbed. "And your father wasn't old, was he? And such a handsome man.... Is it true that he was a chemist?"

"No," answered George calmly. "He was President of the Botanical Society." Heinrich with one arm on the shut piano-top was speaking to Else.

"So you've been in Germany?" she asked.

"Yes," replied Heinrich. "I've been back a fairly long time, four or five weeks."

"And when are you going back again?"

"I don't know, perhaps never."

"Come, you don't believe that yourself — what are you working at?" she added quickly.

"All kinds of things," he answered. "I'm going through a rather restless time. I sketch out a lot but I finish nothing. I'm very rarely keen on completing things, obviously I lose all my interest in things too quickly."

"And people too," added Else.

"Possibly. Only unhappily one's emotions remain attached to people after one's reason has long ago decided to have nothing more to do with them. A poet — if you will allow me to use the expression — must go away from every one who no longer presents any riddle to him... particularly from any one whom he loves."

"They say," suggested Else, "that it is just those whom we know least that we love."

"That's what Nürnberger makes out, but it's not quite right. If it were really so, my dear Else, then life would probably be much more beautiful than it is. No, we know those whom we love much better than we do other people — but we know them with a feeling of shame, bitterness and with the fear that others may know them as well as we do. Love means this — being afraid that the faults which we have discovered in the person we love may be revealed to others. Love means this — being able to look into the future and curse this very gift.... Love means this — knowing some one so that it smashes one."

Else leant on the piano in her childish lady-like way and listened to him curiously. How much she liked

him in moments like this! She would have liked to have stroked his hair again consolingly, as she had done before on the lake when he had been torn by his love for that other woman, but when he suddenly retired into his shell, coldly and drily, and looked as though all his fire had been extinguished she felt that she could never live with him, and she would be bound to run away after a few weeks... with a Spanish officer or a violin *virtuoso*. "It is a good thing," she said somewhat condescendingly, "that you see something of George Wergenthin. He'll have a sound influence on you. He is quieter than you are. I don't think that he is so gifted as you are, and I am sure that he is not so clever."

"What do you know about his gifts?" interrupted Heinrich almost rudely.

George came up and asked Else if they couldn't have the pleasure to-night of hearing one of her songs. She didn't want to. Besides she was principally studying opera parts nowadays. That interested her more. As a matter of fact she was far from having a lyrical temperament. George asked her jokingly if she didn't have perhaps the secret intention of going on the stage?

"With my little bit of a voice!" said Else.

Nürnberger was standing near them. "That wouldn't be an obstacle," he observed. "Why, I feel quite positive that a modern critic would soon turn up who would boom you as an important singer for the very reason that you have no voice, but who would discover some other gift in you by way of compensation, as, for instance, your gift for characterisation, just as we have to-day certain painters who have no sense of colour but only intellect; and celebrated authors who never have the vaguest ideas but who succeed in discovering the most unsuitable epithets for every noun they use."

Else noticed that Nürnberger's manner of speaking got on George's nerves. She turned to him. "I should like to show you something," she said, and took a few steps towards the music-case.

George followed her.

"Here is a collection of old Italian folksongs. I should like you to show me the best. I myself don't know enough about it."

"I can't understand," said George gently, "how you can stand any one like that man Nürnberger near you. He spreads around him an absolute atmosphere of distrust and malice."

"As I've often told you, George, you're no judge of character. After all, what do you know about him? He's different from what you think he is; just ask your friend Heinrich Bermann."

"Oh, I know well enough that he raves about him, too," replied George.

"You're speaking about Nürnberger?" asked Frau Ehrenberg, who had just joined them.

"George can't stand him," said Else in her casual way.

"Well, you're doing him a great injustice, if that's the case. Have you ever read anything of his?"

George shook his head.

"Not even his novel which made so great a sensation fifteen or sixteen years ago? That is really a shame. We've just lent it to Hofrat Wilt. I tell you he was quite flabbergasted at the way in which the whole of present-day Austria is anticipated in that book, written all that time ago."

"Really, is that so?" said George, without conviction.

"You have no idea," continued Frau Ehrenberg, "of the applause with which Nürnberger was then hailed; one could go so far as to say that all doors sprang open before him."

"Perhaps he found that enough," observed Else, with an air of meditative wisdom.

Heinrich was standing by the piano engaged in conversation with Nürnberger, and was making an effort, as he frequently did, to persuade him to undertake a new work or to bring out an edition of previous writings.

Nürnberger would not agree. He was filled with positive horror at the thought of seeing his name a prey to

publicity again, of plunging again into a literary vortex which seemed to him as repulsive as it was fatuous. He had no desire to enter the competition. What was the point? Intriguing cliques that no longer made any attempt at concealment were at work everywhere. Did there remain a single man of sound talent and honest aspirations who did not have to face every minute the prospect of being dragged down into the dirt? Was there a blockhead in the country who could not boast of having been hailed as a genius in some rag or other? Had celebrity in these days anything at all to do with honour, and was being ignored and forgotten worth even a single shrug of regret? And who could know after all what verdicts would pass as the correct ones in the future? Were not the fools really the geniuses and the geniuses really the fools? It would be ridiculous to allow himself to be tempted to stake his peace of mind and even his self-respect on a game where even the greatest possible win held out no promise of any satisfaction.

"None at all?" queried Heinrich. "I'll grant you as much as you like about fame, wealth, world-wide influence — but for a man, simply because all these things are of dubious advantage, to relinquish something so absolutely indubitable as the moments of inner consciousness of one's own power — —"

"Inner consciousness of power? Why don't you say straight away the happiness of creating?"

"It does exist, Nürnberger."

"It may be so; why, I even think I remember that I felt something like that myself now and then, a very long time ago... only, as you no doubt know, as the years went by I completely lost the faculty of deceiving myself."

"Perhaps you only think so," replied Heinrich. "Who knows if it is not that very faculty of self-deception which you have developed more strongly than any other as the years went by?"

Nürnberger laughed. "Do you know how I feel when I hear you talk like that? just like a fencing-master feels who gets a thrust in the heart from one of his own pupils."

"And not even one of his best," said Heinrich.

Herr Ehrenberg suddenly appeared in the doorway, to the astonishment of his wife, who had presumed that he would be by now on his way to the station. He led a young lady by the hand. She was dressed simply in black, and had her hair done extraordinarily high after a fashion that was now out of date. Her lips were full and red, the eyes in the pale vivid face had a clear hard gaze.

"Come along," said Ehrenberg with some malice in his small eyes, and led the visitor straight up to Else, who was chatting with Stanzides. "I've brought a visitor for you."

Else held out her hand. "But this is nice." She introduced them— "Herr Demeter Stanzides — Fräulein Therese Golowski."

Therese bowed slightly and let her gaze rest on him for a while with a little embarrassment as though she were scrutinising a beautiful beast, then she turned to Else: "If I had known that you had such a lot of visitors."

"Do you know what she looks like?" said Stanzides softly to George. "Like a Russian student, don't you think?"

George nodded. "That's about it. I know her. She is a school-friend of Fräulein Else's, and now she's playing a leading part among the Socialists. Just think of it! she's just been in prison for *lèse-majesté*, I believe."

"Yes, I think I've read something about it," replied Demeter. "One should really get to know a person of that type more intimately. She's pretty. Her face might be made of ivory."

"And her features show a lot of energy," added George. "Her brother too is an extraordinary fellow, a pianist and a mathematician, and the father's supposed to be a ruined Jewish skin-dealer."

“It’s really a strange race,” observed Demeter.

In the meanwhile Frau Ehrenberg had come up to Therese. She considered it correct not to show any surprise. “Sit down, Therese,” she said. “And how have you been getting on all this time? Since you’ve devoted yourself to political life you don’t bother about your old friends any more.”

“Yes, I’m afraid my work gives me very little time to pay private visits,” replied Therese, thrusting out her chin, in a way that made her face look masculine and almost ugly.

Frau Ehrenberg vacillated as to whether she should or should not make any reference to the term of imprisonment which Therese had just served. It was certainly to be borne in mind there was scarcely another house in Vienna where ladies who had been locked up a short time ago, were allowed to call.

“And how is your brother?” asked Else.

“He’s doing his service this year,” answered Therese. “You can imagine pretty well how he’s getting on.” And she looked ironically at Demeter’s hussar uniform.

“I suppose he doesn’t get much opportunity there for playing the piano,” said Frau Ehrenberg.

“Oh, he’s given up all thoughts of being a pianist,” replied Therese. “He’s all for politics now.” And turning with a smile to Demeter she added: “Of course you won’t give him away, Herr Oberlieutenant?”

Stanzides laughed somewhat awkwardly.

“What do you mean by politics?” asked Herr Ehrenberg. “Does he want to get into the Cabinet?”

“Not in Austria at any rate,” replied Therese. “He is a Zionist, you know.”

“What?” exclaimed Ehrenberg, and his visage beamed.

“That’s certainly a subject on which we don’t quite agree,” added Therese.

“My dear Therese...” began Ehrenberg.

“You’ll miss your train, my dear,” interrupted his wife.

“I’m not going to miss my train, and anyway, another one goes to-morrow. My dear Therese, this is the only thing I want to say — each person should find happiness in his own way. But in this case your brother and not you is the cleverer of you two. Excuse me, I’m perhaps a layman in politics, but I assure you, Therese, exactly the same thing will happen to you Jewish Social Democrats as happened to the Jewish Liberals and German Nationalists.”

“How do you mean?” asked Therese haughtily. “In what way will the same thing happen to us?”

“In what way...? I’ll tell you soon enough. Who created the Liberal movement in Austria?... the Jews. By whom have the Jews been betrayed and deserted? By the Liberals. Who created the National-German movement in Austria? the Jews. By whom were the Jews left in the lurch?... what — left in the lurch!... Spat upon like dogs!... By the National-Germans, and precisely the same thing will happen in the case of Socialism and Communism. As soon as you’ve drawn the chestnuts out of the fire they’ll start driving you away from the table. It always has been so and always will be so.”

“We will wait and see,” Therese replied quietly.

George and Demeter looked at each other like two friends marooned together on a desert island.

Oskar, who had come in during the middle of his father’s speech, compressed his lips and was very embarrassed. But they all felt a kind of deliverance when Ehrenberg suddenly looked at his watch and took his leave.

“We certainly shan’t agree to-day,” he said to Therese.

Therese smiled. “Scarcely. Hope you will enjoy your journey and I want once more to... to thank you in the name of....”

“Hush!” said Ehrenberg and vanished.

“What are you thanking papa for?” said Else.

“For a gift of money for which I came to ask him in the most shameless manner. Apart from him there is not a single rich man in the circle of my acquaintances. I am not in a position to speak of the purpose for which it is wanted.”

Frau Ehrenberg came up to Bermann and Nürnberger, who were continuing their conversation over the top of the piano, and said softly: “Of course you know that she” — then she looked at Therese— “has just been released from prison.”

“I read about it,” said Heinrich.

Nürnberger half shut his eyes and cast a glance at the group in the corner where the three girls were talking to Stanzides and Willy Eissler and shook his head.

“What cynicism are you suppressing?” said Frau Ehrenberg.

“I was just thinking how easily it might have come about for Fräulein Else to have languished two months in prison and for Fräulein Therese to have held receptions in a stylish drawing-room as daughter of the house.”

“Easily come about?”

“Herr Ehrenberg has had good luck, Herr Golowski bad luck.... Perhaps that is the only difference.”

“Look here, now, Nürnberger,” said Heinrich, “you’re not going to deny that such a thing as individuality exists in the world.... Else and Therese are rather different characters you know.”

“I think so too,” observed Frau Ehrenberg.

Nürnberger shrugged his shoulders. “They are both young girls, quite gifted, quite pretty... everything else is more or less of an accidental appanage, just as it is with most young women — most people, in fact.”

Heinrich shook his head energetically. “No, no,” he said, “life is really not as simple as all that.”

“That doesn’t make it simpler, my dear Heinrich.”

Frau Ehrenberg turned her eyes towards the door and beamed.

Felician had just come in. With all the sureness of a sleep-walker he walked up to the hostess and kissed her hand. “I have just had the pleasure of meeting Herr Ehrenberg on the steps; he told me he was going off to Corfu. It must be awfully beautiful out there.”

“You know Corfu?”

“Yes, a memory of my childhood.” He greeted Nürnberger and Bermann, and they all talked about the South for which Bermann longed and in which Nürnberger did not believe.

George gave his brother a hand-shake which meant a salutation and a goodbye at the same time. As he unobtrusively disappeared through the open door of the dining-room he looked round again, noticed Marianne sitting in the furthest corner of the drawing-room and looking at him ironically through her lorgnette. This woman had always had the mysterious gift of suddenly being present without one realising where she came from. And then a veiled lady came up to him on the steps. “Don’t be in such a hurry, you can surely wait another moment,” she said. “One really shouldn’t spoil women so.... I wonder if you’d be in such a hurry, you know, if you were going to keep an appointment with me...? But you prefer to be non-committal. Probably because you’re afraid that my husband will shoot you when he comes back from Stockholm. I mean he’s probably got as far as Copenhagen to-day. But he places absolute confidence in me. And he’s quite right too. For I’m able to swear to you that no one has managed to get any further than a kiss on my hand.... No, to tell the full truth, on my neck, here. Of course, you believe, too, that I have had an affair with Stanzides? No, he wouldn’t be at all in my line! I positively loathe handsome men. I couldn’t find anything in your brother Felician either....”

One could form no idea when the veiled lady would leave off speaking, for it was Frau Oberberger. Similar conduct in other women would have betokened a specific overture, but that was not so in her case. In spite of the dubious impression created by her whole manner the world had never been able to fix her so far with a single lover. She lived in a strange, but apparently happy, childless marriage. Her brilliant handsome husband, a geologist by profession, had undertaken scientific expeditions in days gone by, when, so Hofrat Wilt used to assert, he had set more store by the good travelling and facilities and unimpeachable cooking of the districts in question than on their being actually unexplored. But for some years past he had given up travelling in favour of lecturing and ladykilling. When he was at home he lived with his wife in the best *camaraderie*. George had frequently, though never seriously, considered the possibility of a liaison with Frau Oberberger. He was even one of those who had kissed her neck, a fact which she probably did not remember herself. And as she threw back her veil now George again surrendered himself with pleasure to the fascination of this face, which though no longer in its first flush of youth was yet both charming and animated. He wanted to take up the conversation, but she went on speaking. "Do you know you're very pale? a nice life you must be leading. What kind of a woman is it who is responsible for taking you away from me this time?"

Hofrat Wilt, with his usual silent step, suddenly stood by them. With a casual air of gallantry and superiority he threw them a "Good-day, beauteous lady, Hullo, Baron," and started to go on.

But Frau Oberberger thought it fitting to inform him first that Baron George was just going to one of his usual orgies — she then followed Hofrat up to the second story at the risk, as she remarked, of his being taken for her ninety-fifth lover if he presented himself at Ehrenberg's at the same time as she did.

It was seven o'clock before George could settle himself in a fly and drive to Mariahilf. He felt quite exhausted by the two hours at Ehrenberg's and he was even more than usually glad at the meeting with Anna which was before him. Since that morning at the miniature exhibition they had seen each other nearly every day; in parks, picture-galleries, at her house. They usually talked about the little incidents of their life or gossiped about books or music. They did not often talk of the past, but when they did it was without doubts or misgivings. For so far as Anna was concerned the adventures from which George had just come were far from being surrounded with the uncanny atmosphere of mystery; while George gathered from her own jesting allusions that she herself had already experienced more than one infatuation, though that did not cause him to lose the serenity of his good spirits or even to ask her any further questions.

He had kissed her for the first time eight days ago, in an empty room in the Liechtentein Gallery, and from that moment Anna had employed the familiar 'du,' as though a less intimate appellation would have rung somewhat false. The fly stopped at a street corner. George got out, lit a cigarette and walked up and down opposite the house out of which Anna was due to come.

After a few minutes she came out of the door, he rushed across the street to meet her and kissed her hand ecstatically. Following her habit, for she was in the habit of reading on her journeys, she carried a book with her in a pressed leather cover.

"It is quite cool, Anna," said George, took the book out of her hand and helped her into the jacket which she had been carrying over her arm.

"I was a little bit late you see," she said, "and I was very impatient to see you. Yes," she added with a smile, "one's temperament will break out now and again. What do you think of my new dress?" she added as they walked on.

"It suits you very well."

"They thought at my lesson that I looked like a lady-in-waiting."

"Who thought so?"

“Frau Bittner herself and her two daughters whom I am teaching.”

“I should rather say, like an Arch-Duchess.”

Anna nodded with satisfaction.

“And now tell me, Anna, all that’s happened to you since yesterday.”

She began quite seriously: “Twelve o’clock, after I left you at the door of our house, dinner in the family circle. Rested a little in the afternoon, and thought about you. Pupils from four to six-thirty, then read ‘Grüner Heinrich,’ and the evening paper. Too lazy to go out again, messed about at home. Supper. The usual domestic scene.”

“Your brother?” queried George.

She answered with a “Yes” that ruled out all further questions. “A little music after supper.... Even tried to sing.”

“Were you satisfied?”

“It was quite good enough for me, anyway,” she said, and George thought he detected a slight note of melancholy in her tone. She quickly went on with her report. “Went to bed at half-past ten, slept well, got up early at eight... one can’t lie in bed any longer in our house... dressed till half-past nine, was about the house till eleven....”

“... Messing about,” added George.

“Right. Then went on to Weils, gave the boy a lesson.”

“How old is he?” asked George.

“Thirteen,” replied Anna.

“Well, after all that is not so young.”

“Quite so,” said Anna. “But you can set your mind at rest when I inform you that he loves his Aunt Adele, a sentimental blonde of thirty-three, and is not thinking for the time being of breaking his troth to her.... Well, to continue the record. Got home at one-thirty, had my meal alone, thank Heaven! Father already at the office, mamma in a state of sleep. Rested again from three to four, thought even more about you, and more seriously too, than yesterday, then went shopping in town, gloves, safety pins and something for mamma, and then drove on the tram, reading all the way to Mariahilf, to the two Bittner kiddies.... So now you know all. Satisfied?”

“Except for the boy of thirteen.”

“Well, I agree that that might be a bit upsetting. But now we should like to know if you haven’t got even more sinister confessions to make to me.”

They were in a narrow silent street, which seemed quite strange to George, and Anna took his arm.

“I have just come from Ehrenbergs’,” he began.

“Well?” queried Anna. “Did they try very much to inveigle you?”

“No, I can’t go so far as that. Of course they seemed a little hurt that I did not go to Auhof this summer,” he added.

“Did dear little Else perform?” Anna asked.

“No; of course I don’t know what happened after I left.”

“It won’t be worth the trouble now,” said Anna with exuberant mirth.

“You are wrong, Anna. There are people there for whom it is quite worth while singing.”

“Who?”

“Heinrich Bermann, Willy Eissler, Demeter Stanzides....”

“Oh, Stanzides!” exclaimed Anna. “Now I am really sorry that I wasn’t there too.”

"It seems to me," said George, "that that is a true word spoken in jest."

"Quite so," replied Anna. "I think Demeter is really desperately handsome."

George was silent for a few seconds and suddenly asked, with more emotion than he usually manifested: "Is it he then...?"

"What 'he' do you mean?"

"The one you... loved more than me."

She smiled, nestled closer up to him and answered simply, though a little ironically: "Am I really supposed to have been fonder of any one else than of you?"

"You confessed it to me yourself," replied George.

"But I also confess to you that I should love you in time more than I have loved or ever could love any one else."

"Are you quite sure about that, Anna?"

"Yes, George, I am quite certain of it."

They had now come again into a more lively street and reluctantly let go of each other's arms.

They remained standing in front of various shops. They discovered a photographer's show-case by a house-door and were very much amused by the laboriously-natural poses in which golden and silver wedding couples, cadets, cooks in their Sunday best and ladies in masked fancy dress were taken.

George asked again in a lighter tone: "So it was Stanzides?"

"What an idea! I have never spoken a hundred words to him in my life."

They went on walking.

"Leo Golowski, then?" asked George.

She shook her head and smiled. "That was calf-love," she replied. "That really doesn't count. I should like to know the girl of sixteen who wouldn't have fallen in love in the country with a handsome youth who fights a duel with a real Count and then goes about for eight days with his arm in a sling."

"But he didn't do it on your account, but for his sister's honour, as it were."

"For Therese's honour? What makes you think that?"

"You told me that the young man had spoken to Therese in the forest while she was studying '*Emilia Galotti*.'"

"Yes, that is quite true. Anyway, she was quite glad to be spoken to. The only thing Leo objected to was that the young Count belonged to a club of young men who really behaved rather cheekily, and I think showed a touch of Anti-Semitism. So when Therese once went with her brother for a walk by the lake, and the Count came up and spoke to Therese as though he had known her for ages, while he mumbled his name off-handedly, for the benefit of Leo, Leo made a bow and introduced himself like this: 'Leo Golowski, Cracow Jew.' I don't know exactly what happened further; there was an exchange of words and the duel took place next day in the cavalry barracks at Klagenfurt."

"So I am quite right," persisted George humorously. "He did fight for his sister's honour."

"No, I tell you. I was there when he once discussed the matter with Therese, and said to her: 'So far as I am concerned you can do whatever amuses you. You can flirt with any one you like'...."

"Only it's got to be a Jew, I suppose...." added George.

Anna shook her head. "He's really not like that."

"I know," replied George gently. "We have become quite good friends lately, your Leo and I.

"Why, only yesterday evening we met at the café again and he was really quite condescending to me. I think he really forgives me my lineage. Besides, I haven't told you that Therese was at Ehrenbergs', too."

And he described the appearance of the young girl in the Ehrenberg drawing-room and the impression she had made on Demeter.

Anna smiled with pleasure.

Later on, when they were again walking arm-in-arm in a quieter street, George began again. “But I still don’t know who your great passion was.”

Anna was silent and looked straight in front of her.

“Come, Anna, you promised me, didn’t you?”

Without looking at him she replied: “If you only had an idea how strange the whole thing seems to me to-day.”

“Why strange?”

“Because the man you’re trying to find out was quite an old man.”

“Thirty-five,” said George jestingly; “isn’t that so?”

She shook her head seriously. “He was fifty-eight or sixty.”

“And you?” asked George slowly.

“It is two years ago last summer. I was then twenty-one.”

George suddenly stood still. “I know now, it was your singing-master. Wasn’t it?”

Anna did not answer.

“So it was he, then?” said George, without being really surprised, for he was aware that all the celebrated master’s pupils fell in love with him in spite of his grey hairs.

“And did you love him most,” asked George, “of all the men you had come across?”

“Strange, isn’t it? but it’s a fact all the same.”

“Did he know it?”

“I think so.”

They had arrived at an open space with a small garden... that was only scantily lighted. At the back there towered a church with a reddish glow. As though drawn to a quieter place they wandered on under dark softly-waving branches.

“And what actually was there between you, if it is not a rude question?”

Anna was silent, and that moment George felt that everything was possible — even that Anna should have been that man’s mistress. But underneath the disquiet which he felt at that thought the desire arose gently and unconsciously to hear his fear confirmed. For if Anna had already belonged to some one else before she became his, the adventure could proceed as lightly and irresponsibly as possible.

“I will tell you the whole story,” said Anna at last. “It is really not so awful.”

“Well?” asked George, strangely excited.

“Once, after the lesson,” Anna began hesitatingly, “he gallantly helped me into my jacket. And then suddenly he drew me to him, took me in his arms and kissed me.”

“And you...?”

“I... I was quite intoxicated.”

“Intoxicated?...”

“Yes, it was something indescribable. He kissed me on the forehead and the hair, and then he took my hand and murmured all sorts of things that I didn’t hear properly....”

“And....”

“And then... then voices came near, he let go my hand and it was all over.”

“All over?”

“Yes, over... of course it was all over.”

“I certainly don’t think it such a matter of course. You saw him again, no doubt.”

“Of course, I still went on learning with him.”

“And...?”

“I tell you it was over... absolutely... as though it had never happened.”

George was surprised that he should feel reassured. “And he never tried again?” he asked.

“Never. It would have been so ridiculous, and as he was very clever he knew that quite well himself. It is quite true that up to then I had been very much in love with him, but after this episode he was nothing more to me than my old teacher. In some way he seemed even older than he really was. I don’t know if you can really understand what I mean. It was as though he had spent all the remains of his youth in that moment.”

“I quite understand,” said George. He believed her and loved her more than before. They went into the church. It was almost dark within the large building. There were only some dim candles burning in front of a side altar, and opposite, behind the small statue of a saint, there shone a feeble light. A broad stream of incense flowed between the dome and the flagstones. The verger was walking, jangling his keys softly. Motionless figures appeared vaguely on the seats at the back. George slowly walked forward with Anna and felt like a young husband on his honeymoon going sight-seeing in a church with his young wife. He said so to Anna. She only nodded.

“But it would be very much nicer,” whispered George, as they stood nestling close together in front of the chancel, “if we really were together somewhere abroad....”

She looked at him ecstatically and yet interrogatively: and he was frightened at his own words. Supposing Anna had taken it as a serious declaration or as a kind of wooing? Was he not obliged to enlighten her that he had not meant it in that way?... He remembered the conversation which they had had a short time ago, when they had gone out hanging on to one umbrella on a rainy windy day in the direction of Schönbrunn. He had suggested to her she should drive into the town with him and dine with him in a private room in some restaurant; she had answered with that iciness in which her whole being was sometimes frozen: “I don’t do that kind of thing.” He had not pressed her further.

And yet a quarter of an hour later she had said to him, apropos no doubt of a conversation about George’s mode of life, but yet with a smile of many possibilities: “You have no initiative, George.” And he had suddenly felt at that moment as though depths in her soul were revealing themselves, undreamt-of and dangerous depths, which it would be a good thing to beware of. He could not help now thinking of this again. What was passing within her mind?... What did she want and what was she ready for?... And what did he desire, what did he feel himself?

Life was so incalculable. Was it not perfectly possible that he should go travelling about the world with her, live with her a period of happiness and finally part from her just as he had parted from many another?... Yet when he thought of the end that was inevitably bound to come, whether death brought it or life itself, he felt a gentle grief in his heart.... She still remained silent. Did she think again that he was lacking in initiative?... Or did she think perhaps “I am really going to succeed, I shall be his wife?...”

He then felt her hand stroke his very gently, with a kind of new tenderness that did him great good.

“George,” she said.

“What is it?” he asked.

“If I were religious,” she replied, “I should like to pray for something now.”

“What for?” said George, feeling almost nervous.

“For you to do something, George — something that really counted. For you to become a genuine artist, a

great artist."

He could not help looking at the floor, as though for very shame that her thoughts had travelled on paths that were so much cleaner than his own.

A beggar held open the thick green curtain. George gave the man a coin; they were in the open air. The street lights shone up, the noise of vehicles and closing shutters suddenly grew near. George felt as if a fine veil which the twilight of the church had woven around him and her had now been torn, and in a tone of relief he suggested a little ride. Anna agreed with alacrity. They got into an open fiacre, had the top pulled down over them, drove through the streets, then drove round the Ring, without seeing much of the buildings and gardens, spoke not a word and nestled closer and closer to each other. They were both conscious of each other's impatience and their own, and they knew it was no longer possible to go back.

When they were near Anna's home George said: "What a pity that you have got to go home now."

She shrugged her shoulders and smiled strangely. The depths, thought George again, but without fear and almost gaily. Before the vehicle stopped at the corner they arranged an appointment for the following morning in the Schwarzenberggarten and then got out. Anna rushed home and George slowly strolled towards the town.

He considered whether he should go into the café. He did not really feel keen on it. Bermann would probably stay to supper at the Ehrenbergs' to-day, one could rarely count on Leo Golowski coming: and George was not much attracted by the other young people, most of them Jewish writers, with whom he had recently struck up a casual acquaintance, even though he had thought many of them not at all uninteresting. Speaking broadly, he found their tone to each other now too familiar, now too formal, now too facetious, now too sentimental: not one of them seemed really free and unembarrassed with the others, scarcely indeed with himself.

Heinrich too had declared only the other day that he didn't want to have anything more to do with the whole set, who had become thoroughly antagonistic to him since his successes. George regarded it as perfectly possible that Heinrich, with his characteristic vanity and hypochondria, was scenting enmity and persecution where it was perhaps merely a case of indifference or antipathy. He for his part knew that it was not so much friendship that attracted him to the young author, as the curiosity to get to know a strange man more intimately. Perhaps also the interest of looking into a world which up to the present had been more or less foreign to him. For while he himself had remained somewhat reserved and had specially avoided any reference to his own relations with women, Heinrich had not only told him of his distant mistress, for whom he asserted he suffered pangs of jealousy, but also of a blonde and pretty young person with whom he had recently got into the habit of spending his evenings — merely to deaden his feelings as he ironically added; he not only told him of his life as a student and journalist in Vienna, which did not lie so far back, but also of his childhood and boyhood in that little provincial town in Bohemia where he had come into the world thirty years ago. The half-affectionate and half-disgusted tone, with its mixture of attachment and detachment, in which Heinrich spoke of his family and especially of his suffering father, who had been an advocate in that little town and a member of Parliament for a considerable period, struck George as strange and at times as almost painful. Why, he seemed to be even a little proud of the fact that when he was only twenty years old he had prophesied his blissfully confident parent's fate to the old man himself, exactly as it had subsequently fulfilled itself. After a short period of popularity and success the growth of the Anti-Semitic movement had driven him out of the German Liberal party, most of his friends had deserted and betrayed him, and a dissipated 'corps' student, who described at public meetings the Tschechs and Jews as the most dangerous enemies of Germanism, propriety and morality, while at home he thrashed his wife and had children by his

servants, was his successor in the confidence of the electors and in Parliament. Heinrich, who had always felt a certain amount of irritation at his father's phrases, honest though they were, about Pan-Germanism, liberty and progress, had at first gloated over the spectacle of the old man's downfall. And it was only when the lawyer who had once been so much in demand began to lose his practice into the bargain, and the financial position of the family got worse from day to day, that the son began to experience a somewhat belated sympathy. He had given up his legal studies early enough, and had been compelled to come to the help of his family with his daily journalistic work. His first literary successes raised no echo in the melancholy household. There were sinister signs that madness was looming over his father, while now that the latter was falling into mental darkness his mother, for whom state and fatherland had ceased to exist, when her husband was not elected to Parliament, lost her grip of life and of the world. Heinrich's only sister, once a buxom clever girl, had developed melancholia after an unhappy passion for a kind of provincial Don Juan, and with morbid perverseness she put the blame for the family misfortune on the shoulders of her brother, though she had always got on with him perfectly well in her youth. Heinrich also told George about other relations whom he remembered in his early days, and a half-grotesque, half-pathetic series of strict bigoted old-fashioned Jews and Jewesses swept by George like shadows from another world. He eventually realised that Heinrich did not feel himself any homesickness for that small town with its miserable petty squabbles, or any call to return to the gloomy narrowness of his almost ruined family, and saw that Heinrich's egoism was at once his salvation and his deliverance.

It was striking nine from the tower of the Church of St. Michael when George stood in front of the café. He saw Rapp the critic sitting by a window not completely covered by the curtain, with a pile of papers in front of him on the table. He had just taken his glasses off his nose and was polishing them, and the dull eyes brought a look of absolute deadness into a face that was usually so alive with clever malice. Opposite him with gestures that swept over vacancy sat Gleissner the poet in all the brilliancy of his false elegance, with a colossal black cravat in which a red stone scintillated. When George, without hearing their voices, saw the lips of these two men move, while their glances wandered to and fro, he could scarcely understand how they could stand sitting opposite each other for a quarter of an hour in that cloud of hate. It flashed across him at once that this was the atmosphere in which the life of the whole set played its comedy, and through which there darted many a redeeming flash of wit and self-analysis.

What had he in common with these people? A kind of horror seized on him, he turned away and decided to look up his club once again instead of going into the café, the rooms of which he had not been in for months past. It was only a few steps away. George was soon walking up the broad marble staircase, went into the little dining-room with the light green curtain and was greeted as a long-lost friend by Ralph Skelton, the attaché of the English Embassy, and Doctor von Breitner. They talked about the tournament which was going to take place and about the banquet that was going to be organised in honour of the foreign fencing-masters; they gossiped about the new operetta at the Wiedner Theatre where Fräulein Lovan as a bayadère had come on to the stage almost naked, and about the duel between the manufacturer Heidenfeld and Lieutenant Novotny, in which the injured husband had fallen. George had a game of billiards with Skelton after the meal and won. He felt in better spirits and resolved henceforth to pay more frequent visits to these airy prettily-furnished rooms frequented by pleasant well-bred young men with whom one could converse lightly and pleasantly.

Felician appeared, told his brother that it had been very amusing at the Ehrenbergs' and that Frau Marianne sent her regards. Breitner, with one of his celebrated huge cigars in his mouth, joined the brothers, and began to speak about the hanging of the portraits of some of those members of the club who had conferred services

on it, mentioning particularly the one of young Labinski who had ended all by suicide in the previous year. And George could not help thinking of Grace, of that strange hot-and-cold conversation with her in the cemetery in the melting February snow and of that wonderful night on the moonlit deck of the steamer that had brought them both from Palermo to Naples. He scarcely knew which woman he longed for the most at this particular moment: for Marianne whom he had deserted, for Grace who had vanished, or for the fair young creature with whom he had walked about in a dusky church a few hours ago like a honeymoon couple in a foreign town, and who had wanted to pray to heaven for him to become a great artist. The memory stirred a gentler emotion. Was it not almost as though she set more store by his artistic future than by him himself?... No.... Not more. She had only just spoken out what had lain slumbering all the time at the bottom of her soul. It was simply that he forgot as it were only too frequently that he was an artist. But all that must be changed. He had begun and prepared so much. Just a little industry and success was assured. And next year he would go out into the world. He would soon get a post as conductor and with a sudden leap he would find himself launched in a profession that brought both money and prestige. He would get to know new people, a different sky would shine above him and white unknown arms stretched towards him mysteriously as though from distant clouds. And while the young people at his side were weighing very seriously the chances of the champions at the approaching tournament, George went on dreaming in his corner of a future full of work, fame and love.

At the same time Anna was lying in her dark room. She was not asleep and her wide-open eyes were turned towards the ceiling. She had for the first time in her life the infallible feeling that there was a man in the world who could do anything he liked with her. Her mind was firmly made up to take all the happiness or all the sorrow that might lie in front of her, and she had a gentle hope, more beautiful than all her dreams of the past, of a serene and abiding happiness.

III



GEORGE AND HEINRICH dismounted from their cycles. The last villas lay behind them and the broad road with its gradual upward incline led into the forest. The foliage still hung fairly thickly on the trees, but every slight puff of wind brought away some leaves which slowly fluttered down. The shimmer of autumn floated over the yellow-reddish hills. The road ascended higher past an imposing restaurant garden approached by a flight of stone steps. Only a few people sat in the open air, most of them were in the glass verandah, as though they did not quite trust themselves to the faltering warmth of this late October day, through which a dangerous and chilly draught kept on penetrating.

George thought of the melancholy memory of the winter evening on which he and Frau Marianne had paid a visit here, and had had the place to themselves. He had been bored as he had sat by her side and listened impatiently to her prattle about yesterday's concert in which Fräulein Bellini had sung songs; and when he had been obliged to get out of the carriage in a suburban street on his way back on account of Marianne's nervousness, he had taken a deep breath of deliverance. A similar feeling of release, of course, almost invariably came over him whenever he left a mistress, even after some more or less beautiful hours. Even when he had left Anna on her doorstep a few days ago, after the first evening of complete happiness, the first emotion of which he was conscious was the joy of being alone again. And immediately in its train, even before the feeling of gratitude and the dim realisation of a genuine affinity with this gentle creature who enveloped his whole being with such intimate tenderness had managed to penetrate his soul, there fluttered through it a wistful dream of voyages over a shimmering sea, of coasts which approached seductively, of walks along shores which would vanish again on the next day, of blue distances, freedom from responsibility and solitude.

The next morning, when the atmosphere of the previous evening, pregnant as it was with memory and with presage, enveloped him as he woke up, the journey was of course put off to a later but not so distant though of course more convenient time. For George knew at this very hour, though without any touch of horror, that this adventure was predestined to have an end however sincerely and picturesquely it had begun. Anna had given herself to him without indicating by a word, a look or gesture that so far as she was concerned, what was practically a new chapter in her life was now beginning. And in the same way George felt quite convinced that the farewell to her, too, would be devoid of melancholy or of difficulty; a pressure of the hand, a smile and a quiet "it was very beautiful"; and he felt still easier in his mind when she came to him at their next meeting with a simple intimate greeting, quite free from that uneasy tone of nestling sorrow or accomplished fate which he had heard thrilling in the voice of many another woman, who had woken up to such a morning, though not for the first time in her life.

A faintly-defined line of mountains appeared in the distance and then vanished again as the road mounted through thick-wooded country up to the heights. Pine-wood and leaf-bearing wood grew peacefully next to each other, and the foliage of beeches and birch-trees shimmered with its autumn tints through the quieter tints of the firs. Ramblers could be seen, some with knapsack, alpine-stock and nailed shoes, as though equipped for serious mountaineering; now and again cyclists would come whizzing down the road in a feverish rush. Heinrich told his companion of a cycle-tour which he had made along the Rhine at the beginning of September.

"Isn't it strange," said George, "I have knocked about the world a fair bit, but I do not yet know the district

where my ancestors' home was."

"Really?" queried Heinrich, "and you feel no emotion when you hear the word Rhine spoken?"

George smiled. "After all it is nearly a hundred years since my great-grandparents left Biebrich."

"Why do you smile, George? It's a much longer time since my ancestors wandered out of Palestine, and yet many otherwise quite rational people insist on my heart throbbing with homesickness for that country."

George shook his head irritably. "Why do you always keep bothering about those people? It will really soon become a positive obsession with you."

"Oh, you think I mean the Anti-Semites? Not a bit of it. I am not touchy any more about them, not usually, at any rate. But you just go and ask our friend Leo what his views are on this question."

"Oh, you mean him, do you? Well, he doesn't take it so literally but more or less symbolically... or from the political standpoint," he added uncertainly.

Heinrich nodded. "Both these ideas are very intimately connected in brains of that character." He sank into meditation for a while, thrust his cycle forward with slight impatient spurts and was soon a few paces in front again. He then began to talk again about his September tour. He thought of it again with what was almost emotion. Solitude, change of scene, movement: had he not enjoyed a threefold happiness? "I can scarcely describe to you," he said, "the feeling of inner freedom which thrilled through me. Do you know those moods in which all one's memories near or distant lose, as it were, their oppressive reality? all the people who have meant anything in one's life, whether it be grief, care or tenderness, seem to sweep by more like shadows, or, to put it more precisely, like forms which one has imagined oneself? And the creations of one's own imagination also come on the scene, of course, and are certainly quite as vivid as the people whom one remembers as having been real; and then one gets the most extraordinary complications between the figures of reality and of one's imagination. I could describe to you a conversation which took place between my great-uncle who is a rabbi and the Duke Heliodorus, the character you know who is the centre of my opera plot — a conversation which was amusing and profound to a degree which, speaking generally, neither life nor any opera libretto scarcely ever reaches.... Yes, such journeys are really wonderful, and so one goes on through towns which one has never seen before, and perhaps will never see again, past absolutely unknown faces which speedily vanish again for all eternity.... Then one whizzes again into the street between the rivers and the vineyards. Such moods really cleanse the soul. A pity that they are so rarely vouchsafed to one."

George always felt a certain embarrassment whenever Heinrich became tragic. "Perhaps we might go on a bit," he said, and they jumped on to their machines.

A narrow bumpy byroad between the forest and fields soon led them to a bare unimpressive two-storied house, which they recognised to be an inn by its brown surly signboard. On the green, which was separated from the house by the street, stood a large number of tables, many covered with cloths which had once been white, others with cloths which were embroidered. Ten or twelve young men who were members of a cycling club sat at some pushed-back tables. Several of them had taken off their coats, others with an affectation of smartness wore them with their sleeves hanging down. Designs in magnificent red and green knitting blazed on the sky-blue sweaters with their yellow edges.

A chorus rang out to the sky with more power than purity: "Der Gott der Eisen wachsen liess, der wollte keine Knechte."

Heinrich surveyed the company with a quick glance, half shut his eyes and said to George with clenched teeth and vehement emphasis: "I don't know if these youths are staunch, true and courageous, which they certainly think they are; but there is no doubt that they smell of wool and perspiration, and so I am all for our sitting down at a reasonable distance from them."

What *does* he want? thought George. Would he find it more congenial if a party of Polish Jews were to sit here and sing psalms?

Both pushed their machines to a distant table and sat down. A waiter appeared in black evening dress sprinkled with the relics of grease and vegetables, cleared the table energetically with a dirty napkin, took their orders and went off.

"Isn't it lamentable," said Heinrich, "that in the immediate outskirts of Vienna nearly all the inns should be in such a state of neglect? It makes one positively depressed."

George thought that this exaggerated regret was out of place. "Oh well, in the country," he said, "you have got to take things as you find them. It is almost part of the whole thing."

Heinrich would not admit the soundness of this point of view. He began to develop a plan for the erection of seven hotels on the borders of the Wienerwald, and was calculating that one would need at the outside three or four millions, when Leo Golowski suddenly appeared. He was in *mufti*, which, as was frequently the case with him, was not without a certain element of bizarreness. He wore to-day, in addition to a light-grey lounge suit, a blue velvet waistcoat and a yellow silk cravat with a smooth steel tie-ring. Both the others greeted him with delight and expressed their astonishment.

Leo sat down by them. "I heard you fixing up your excursion yesterday evening, and when we were discharged from the barracks at nine o'clock to-day, I at once thought how nice it would be to have a chat for an hour or so in the open air with a couple of keen and congenial men. So I went home, threw myself into mufti and started off." He spoke in his usual tone, which always fascinated George with its charm and semi-naïveté, though when he thought of it afterwards it always seemed to possess a certain touch of irony, of insincerity in fact. He had a knack of conducting serious conversations with a cut-and-dried definiteness that really impressed George. He had recently had an opportunity of listening to discussions in the café between Leo and Heinrich on questions dealing with the theory of art, especially the relation between the laws of music and mathematics. Leo thought he was on the track of the fundamental cause of major and minor keys affecting the human soul in such different ways. George took pleasure in following the chain of his acute and lucid analysis, even though he was instinctively on his guard against the audacious attempt to ascribe all the magic and mystery of sound to the rule of laws, which were as inexorable as those in accordance with which the earth and the planets revolved, and must necessarily spring from the same origin as those eternal principles. It was only when Heinrich tried to carry Leo's theories still further, and to apply them for instance to the products of literary style, that George became impatient and immediately felt himself tacit ally of Leo who invariably smiled gently at Heinrich's tangled and fantastic expositions.

The meal was served and the young men ate with appetite; Heinrich not less than the others, in spite of the fact that he expressed his opinion of the inferiority of the cooking in the most disparaging terms, and was inclined to regard the conduct of the proprietor, not merely as a sign of his personally low mind, but as characteristic of the decay of Austria in many other spheres. The conversation turned on the military position of the country, and Leo gave a satirical description of his comrades and superiors, with which both the others were very much amused. Much merriment, especially, was occasioned by a First-Lieutenant who had introduced himself to the volunteer contingent with the ominous words: "I shan't give you anything to laugh about, I am a fiend in human form."

While they were still eating a gentleman came up to the table, clicked his heels together, put his hand to his cycle cap by way of salutation, addressed them with a facetious "All hail," added a friendly "Hallo" for the benefit of Leo, and introduced himself to Heinrich. "My name is Josef Rosner." He then cheerily began the conversation with these words: "I suppose you gentlemen are also on a cycling expedition...." As no one

answered him he continued: “One must make the best of the last fine days, the splendid weather won’t last much longer.”

“Won’t you sit down, Herr Rosner?” asked George politely.

“Much obliged but....” He pointed to his party.... “We have only just started out, we have still got a lot in front of us; going to ride down to Tull and then via Stockerau to Vienna. Excuse me, gentlemen.” He took a wooden vesta from the table and lighted his cigarette with dignity.

“What kind of a club are you in then, old chap?” asked Leo, and George was surprised at the “old chap,” till it occurred to him that they had both known each other from boyhood.

“This is the Sechshauser Cycle Club,” replied Josef. In spite of the fact that no astonishment was expressed, he added: “Of course you are surprised, gentlemen, at a real Viennese like myself belonging to this suburban club, but it is only because a great friend of mine is the captain there. You see that fat chap there, just slipping into his coat. That is Jalaudek, the son of the town councillor and member of Parliament.”

“Jalaudek...” repeated Heinrich with obvious loathing in his voice, and said nothing more.

“Oh yes,” said Leo, “that’s the man, you know, who in a recent debate about the popular education board gave this magnificent definition of science. Didn’t you read it?” He turned to the others.

They did not remember.

“‘Science,’” quoted Leo, “‘Science is what one Jew copies from another.’”

All laughed. Even Josef, who, however, immediately started explaining: “He is really not that sort at all — I know him quite well — only he is so crude in political life... simply because the opposing parties scratch each other’s eyes out in our beloved Austria. But in ordinary life he is a very affable gentleman. The boy is much more Radical.”

“Is your club Christian Socialist or National German?” asked Leo courteously.

“Oh, we don’t make any distinction. Only of course as things are going nowadays....” He stopped with sudden embarrassment.

“Come, come,” said Leo encouragingly. “It is perfectly obvious that your club is not tainted by a single Jew. Why, one notices that a mile off.”

Josef thought it was best form to laugh. He then said: “Excuse me, no politics in the mountains! Anyway, as we are on this topic you are labouring under a delusion, gentlemen. For instance, we have a man in the club who is engaged to a Jewish girl. But they are beckoning to me already. Goodbye, gentlemen; so long, Leo; goodbye, all.” He saluted again and swaggered off.

The others, smiling in spite of themselves, followed him with their eyes. Then Leo suddenly turned to George and asked: “And how is his sister getting on with her singing?”

“What?” said George, startled and blushing slightly.

“Therese has been telling me,” went on Leo quietly, “that you and Anna do music together sometimes. Is her voice all right now?”

“Yes,” replied George, hesitating, “I believe so; at any rate I think it is very pleasant, very melodious, especially in the deeper registers. It is a pity in my view that it is not big enough for larger rooms.”

“Not big enough?” repeated Leo meditatively.

“How would you describe it?”

Leo shrugged his shoulders and looked quietly at George. “It is like this,” he said. “I personally like the voice very much, but even when Anna had the idea of going on the stage... to speak quite frankly, I never thought anything would come of it.”

“You probably knew,” replied George with deliberate casualness, “that Fräulein Anna suffers from a

peculiar weakness of the vocal chords."

"Yes, of course I knew that, but if she were cut out for an artistic career, really had it in her, I mean, she would certainly have overcome that weakness."

"You think so?"

"Yes, I do. That is my decided opinion. That's why I think that expressions like 'peculiar weakness' or 'her voice is not big enough' are more or less euphemisms for something more fundamental, more psychological. It's quite clear that her fate line says nothing about her being an artist, that's a fact. She was, so to speak, predestined from the beginning to end her days in respectable domesticity."

Heinrich enthusiastically caught up the theory of the fate line, and led their thoughts in his own erratic way from the sphere of cleverness to the sphere of sophistry, and from the sphere of sophistry to the sphere of the nonsensical.

He then suggested that they should bask for half an hour in the meadow in the sun. "It will probably not shine so warm again during this year."

The others agreed.

A hundred yards from the inn George and Leo stretched themselves out on their cloaks. Heinrich sat down on the grass, crossed his arms over his knees, and looked in front of him. At his feet the sward sloped down to the forest. Still deeper down rested the villas of Neuwaldegg, buried in loose foliage. The spire-crosses and dazzling windows of the town shone out from the bluish-grey clouds, and far away, as though lifted up by a moving haze, the plain swept away to a gradual darkness.

Pedestrians were walking over the fields towards the inn. Some gave them a greeting as they passed, and one of them, a slim young man who led a child by the hand, remarked to Heinrich: "This is a really fine day, just like May."

Heinrich felt at first his heart go out as it were involuntarily, as it often did towards casual and unexpected friendliness of this description. But he immediately pulled himself together, for of course he realised that the young man was only intoxicated, as it were, with the mildness of the day and the peace of the landscape; that at the bottom of his soul he too felt hostile to him, just like all the others who had strolled past him so harmlessly, and he himself found difficulty in understanding why the view of these gently sloping hills and the town merging into twilight should affect him with so sweet a melancholy, in view of the fact that the men who lived there meant so little good by him, and meant him even that little but rarely. The cycling club whizzed along the street which was quite close to them. The jauntily-worn coats fluttered, the badges gleamed and crude laughter rang out over the fields.

"Awful people," said Leo casually without changing his place.

Heinrich motioned down below with a vague movement of his head. "And fellows like that," he said with set teeth, "imagine that they are more at home here than we are."

"Oh, well," answered Leo quietly, "they aren't so far out in that, those fellows there."

Heinrich turned scornfully towards him: "Excuse me, Leo, I forgot for a moment that you yourself wish to count as only here on sufferance."

"I don't wish that for a minute," replied Leo with a smile, "and you need not misunderstand me so perversely. One really can't bear a grudge against these people if they regard themselves as the natives and you and me as the foreigners. After all, it is only the expression of their healthy instinct for an anthropological fact which is confirmed by history. Neither Jewish nor Christian sentimentalism can do anything against that and all the consequences which follow from it." And turning to George he asked him in a tone which was only too courteous: "Don't you think so too?"

George reddened and cleared his throat, but had no opportunity of answering, for Heinrich, on whose forehead two deep furrows now appeared, immediately began to speak with considerable bitterness.

"My own instinct is at any rate quite as much a rule of conduct for me as the instinct of Herren Jalaudek Junior and Senior, and that instinct tells me infallibly that my home is here, just here, and not in some land which I don't know, the description of which doesn't appeal to me the least bit and which certain people now want to persuade me is my fatherland on the strength of the argument that that was the place from which my ancestors some thousand years ago were scattered into the world. One might further observe on that point that the ancestors of the Herren Jalaudek and even of our friend Baron von Wergenthin were quite as little at home here as mine and yours."

"You mustn't be angry with me," retorted Leo, "but your standpoint in these matters is really somewhat limited. You are always thinking about yourself and the really quite irrelevant circumstance... excuse my saying irrelevant circumstance, that you are an author who happens to write in the German language because he was born in a German country, and happens to write about Austrian people and Austrian conditions because he lives in Austria. But the primary question is not about you, or about me either, or even about the few Jewish officials who do not get promoted, the few Jewish volunteers who do not get made officers, the Jewish lecturers who either get their Professorship too late or not at all — those are sheer secondary inconveniences so to speak; we have to deal, in considering this question, with quite another class of men whom you know either imperfectly or not at all. We have to deal with destinies to which, I assure you, my dear Heinrich, that in spite of your real duty to do so, I am sure you have not yet given sufficient thorough thought. I am sure you haven't.... Otherwise you wouldn't be able to discuss all these matters in the superficial and the... egoistic way you are now doing."

He then told them of his experiences at the Bâle Zionist Congress in which he had taken part in the previous year, and where he had obtained a deeper insight into the character and psychological condition of the Jewish people than he had ever done before. With these people, whom he saw at close quarters for the first time, the yearning for Palestine, he knew it for a fact, was no artificial pose. A genuine feeling was at work within them, a feeling that had never become extinguished and was now flaming up afresh under the stress of necessity. No one could doubt that who had seen, as he had, the holy scorn shine out in their looks when a speaker exclaimed that they must give up the hope of Palestine for the time being and content themselves with settlements in Africa and the Argentine. Why, he had seen old men, not uneducated men either, no, learned and wise old men, weeping because they must needs fear that that land of their fathers, which they themselves would never be able to tread, even in the event of the realisation of the boldest Zionist plans, would perhaps never be open to their children and their children's children.

George listened with surprise, and was even somewhat moved.

But Heinrich, who had been walking up and down the field during Leo's narrative, exclaimed that he regarded Zionism as the worst affliction that had ever burst upon the Jews, and that Leo's own words had convinced him of it more profoundly than any previous argument or experience.

National feeling and religion, those had always been the words which had embittered him with their wanton, yes malignant, ambiguity. Fatherland.... Why, that was nothing more than a fiction, a political idea floating in the air, changeable, intangible. It was only the home, not the fatherland which had any real significance... and so the feeling of home was synonymous with the right to a home. And so far as religions were concerned, he liked Christian and Jewish mythology quite as much as Greek and Indian; but as soon as they began to force their dogmas upon him, he found them all equally intolerable and repulsive. And he felt himself akin with no one, no, not with any one in the whole world: with the weeping Jews in Ble as little as

with the bawling Pan-Germans in the Austrian Parliament; with Jewish usurers as little as with noble robber-knights; with a Zionist bar-keeper as little as with a Christian Socialist grocer. And least of all would the consciousness of a persecution which they had all suffered, and of a hatred whose burden fell upon them all, make him feel linked to men from whom he felt himself so far distant in temperament. He did not mind recognising Zionism as a moral principle and a social movement, if it could honestly be regarded in that light, but the idea of the foundation of a Jewish state on a religious and national basis struck him as a nonsensical defiance of the whole spirit of historical evolution. "And you too, at the bottom of your heart," he explained, standing still in front of Leo, "you don't think either that this goal will ever prove attainable; why, you don't even wish it, although you fancy yourself in your element trying to get there. What is your home-country, Palestine? A geographical idea. What does the faith of your father mean to you? A collection of customs which you have now ceased to observe and some of which seem as ridiculous and in as bad taste to you, as they do to me."

They went on talking for a long time, now vehemently and almost offensively, then calmly, and in the honest endeavour to convince each other. Frequently they were surprised to find themselves holding the same opinion, only again to lose touch with each other the next moment in a new contradiction. George, stretched on his cloak, listened to them. His mind soon took the side of Leo, whose words seemed to thrill with an ardent pity for the unfortunate members of his race, and who would turn proudly away from people who would not treat him as their equal. Soon he felt nearer again in spirit to Heinrich, who treated with anger and scorn the attempt, as wild as it was short-sighted, to collect from all the corners of the world the members of a race whose best men had always merged in the culture of the land of their adoption, or had at any rate contributed to it, and to send them all together to a foreign land, a land to which no homesickness called them. And George gradually appreciated how difficult those same picked men about whom Heinrich had been speaking, the men who were hatching in their souls the future of humanity, would find it to come to a decision. How dazed must be their consciousness of their existence, their value and their rights, tossed to and fro as they were between defiance and exhaustion, between the fear of appearing importunate and their bitter resentment at the demand that they must needs yield to an insolent majority, between the inner consciousness of being at home in the country where they lived and worked, and their indignation at finding themselves persecuted and insulted in that very place. He saw for the first time the designation Jew, which he himself had often used flippantly, jestingly and contemptuously, in a quite new and at the same time melancholy light. There dawned within him some idea of this people's mysterious destiny, which always expressed itself in every one who sprang from the race, not less in those who tried to escape from that origin of theirs, as though it were a disgrace, a pain or a fairy tale that did not concern them at all, than in those who obstinately pointed back to it as though to a piece of destiny, an honour or an historical fact based on an immovable foundation.

And as he lost himself in the contemplation of the two speakers, and looked at their figures, which stood out in relief against the reddish-violet sky in sharply-drawn, violently-moving lines, it occurred to him, and not for the first time, that Heinrich who insisted on being at home here, resembled both in figure and gesture some fanatical Jewish preacher, while Leo, who wanted to go back to Palestine with his people, reminded him in feature and in bearing of the statue of a Greek youth which he had once seen in the Vatican or the Naples museum. And he understood again quite well, as his eye followed with pleasure Leo's lively aristocratic gestures, how Anna could have experienced a mad fancy for her friend's brother years ago in that summer by the seaside.

Heinrich and Leo were still standing opposite each other on the grass, while their conversation became lost in a maze of words. Their sentences rushed violently against each other, wrestled convulsively, shot past each

other and vanished into nothingness, and George noticed at some moment or other that he was only listening to the sound of the speeches, without being able to follow their meaning.

A cool breeze came up from the plain, and George got up from the sward with a slight shiver. The others, who had almost forgotten his presence, were thus called back again to actualities, and they decided to leave. Full daylight still shone over the landscape, but the sun was couched faint and dark on the long strip of an evening cloud.

"Conversations like this," said Heinrich, as he strapped his cloak on to his cycle, "always leave me with a sense of dissatisfaction, which even goes as far as a painful feeling in the neighbourhood of the stomach. Yes really. They just lead absolutely nowhere. And after all, what do political views matter to men who don't make politics their career or their business? Do they exert the slightest influence on the policy and moulding of existence? You, Leo, are just like myself; neither of us will ever do anything else, can ever do anything else, than just accomplish that which, in view of our character and our capacities, we are able to accomplish. You will never migrate to Palestine all your life long, even if Jewish states were founded and you were offered a position as prime-minister, or at any rate official pianist — —"

"Oh, you can't know that," interrupted Leo.

"I know it for a certainty," said Heinrich. "That's why I'll admit, into the bargain, that in spite of my complete indifference to every single form of religion I would positively never allow myself to be baptised, even if it were possible — though that is less the case to-day than ever it was — of escaping once and for all Anti-Semitic bigotry and villainy by a dodge like that."

"Hum," said Leo, "but supposing the mediæval stake were to be lighted again."

"In that case," retorted Heinrich, "I hereby solemnly bind myself to take your advice implicitly."

"Oh," objected George, "those times will certainly not come again."

Both the others were unable to help laughing at George being kind enough to reassure them in that way about their future, in the name, as Heinrich observed, of the whole of Christendom.

In the meanwhile they had crossed the field.

George and Heinrich pushed their cycles forward up the bumpy by-road, while Leo at their side walked on the turf with his cloak fluttering in the wind. They were all silent for quite a time, as though exhausted. At the place where the bad path turned off towards the broad high road, Leo remained stationary and said: "We will have to leave each other here, I am afraid." He shook hands with George and smiled. "You must have been pretty well bored to-day," he said.

George blushed. "I say now, you must take me for a...."

Leo held George's hand in a firm grip. "I take you for a very shrewd man and also for a very good sort. Do you believe me?"

George was silent.

"I should like to know," continued Leo, "whether you believe me, George. I am keen on knowing." His voice assumed a tone of genuine sincerity.

"Why, of course I believe you," replied George, still, however, with a certain amount of impatience.

"I am glad," said Leo, "for I really feel a sympathy between us, George." He looked straight into his eyes, then shook hands once more with him and Heinrich and turned to go.

But George suddenly had the feeling that this young man who with his fluttering cloak and his head slightly bent forward was striding down-hill in the middle of the broad street was not waiting to any "home," but to some foreign sphere somewhere, where no one could follow him. He found this feeling all the more incomprehensible since he had not only spent many hours recently with Leo in conversation at the café, but

had also received all possible information from Anna about him, his family and his position in life. He knew that that summer at the seaside, which now lay six years back, as did Anna's youthful infatuation, had marked the last summer which the Golowski family had enjoyed free from trouble, and that the business of the old man had been completely ruined in the subsequent winter. It had been extraordinary, according to Anna's account, how all the members of the family had adapted themselves to the altered conditions, as though they had been long prepared for this revolution. The family removed from their comfortable house in the Rathaus quarter to a dismal street in the neighbourhood of the Augarten. Herr Golowski undertook all kinds of commission business while Frau Golowski did needlework for sale.

Therese gave lessons in French and English and at first continued to attend the dramatic school. It was a young violin player belonging to an impoverished noble Russian family who awakened her interest in political questions. She soon abandoned her art, for which, as a matter of fact, she had always shown more inclination than real talent, and in a short time she was in the full swing of the Social Democratic movement as a speaker and agitator. Leo, without agreeing with her views, enjoyed her fresh and audacious character. He often attended meetings with her, but as he was not keen on being impressed by magniloquence, whether it took the form of promises which were never fulfilled or of threats which disappeared into thin air, he found it good fun to point out to her, on the way home, with an irresistible acuteness, the inconsistencies in her own speeches and those of the members of her party. But he always made a particular point of trying to convince her that she would never have been able to forget so completely her great mission for days and weeks on end, if her pity for the poor and the suffering were really as deep an emotion as she imagined.

Leo's own life, moreover, had no definite object. He attended technical science lectures, gave piano lessons, sometimes went so far as to plan out a musical career, and practised five or six hours a day for weeks on end. But it was still impossible to forecast what he would finally decide on. Inasmuch it was his way to wait almost unconsciously for a miracle to save him from anything disagreeable, he had put off his year of service till he was face to face with the final time-limit, and now in his twenty-fifth year he was serving for the first time.

Their parents allowed Leo and Therese to go their own way, and in spite of their manifold differences of opinion there seemed to be no serious discord in the Golowski family. The mother usually sat at home, sewed, knitted and crocheted, while the father went about his business with increasing apathy, and liked best of all to watch the chess-players in the café, a pleasure which enabled him to forget the ruin of his life. Since the collapse of his business he seemed unable to shake off a certain feeling of embarrassment towards his children, so that he was almost proud when Therese would give him now and again an article which she had written to read, or when Leo was good enough to play a game on Sundays with him on the board he loved so well.

It always seemed to George as though his own sympathy for Leo were fundamentally connected with Anna's long-past fancy for him. He felt, and not for the first time, curiously attracted to a man to whom a soul which now belonged to him, had flown in years gone by.

George and Heinrich had mounted their cycles, and were riding along a narrow road through the thick forest that loomed darker and darker. A little later, as the forest retreated behind them again on both sides, they had the setting sun at their back, while the long shadows of their bodies kept running along in front of their cycles. The slope of the road became more and more pronounced and soon led them between low houses which were overhung with reddish foliage. A very old man sat in a seat in front of the door, a pale child looked out of an open window. Otherwise not a single human being was to be seen.

"Like an enchanted village," said George.

Heinrich nodded. He knew the place. He had been here with his love on a wonderful summer day this year. He thought of it and burning longing throbbed through his heart. And he remembered the last hours that he had spent with her in Vienna in his cool room with the drawn-down blinds, through whose interstices the hot August morning had glittered in: he remembered their last walk through the Sunday quiet of the cool stone streets and through the old empty courtyards — and the complete absence of any idea that all this was for the last time. For it was only the next day that the letter had come, the ghastly letter in which she had written that she had wished to spare him the pain of farewell, and that when he read these words, she would already be quite a long way over the frontier on her journey to the new foreign town.

The road became more animated. Charming villas appeared encircled with cosy little gardens, wooded hills sloped gently upwards behind the houses. They saw once again the expanse of the valley as the waning day rested over meadows and fields. The lamps had been lit in a great empty restaurant garden. A hasty darkness seemed to be stealing down from every quarter simultaneously. They were now at the cross-roads. George and Heinrich got off and lit cigarettes.

"Right or left?" asked Heinrich.

George looked at his watch. "Six,.. and I've got to be in town by eight."

"So I suppose we can't dine together?" said Heinrich.

"I am afraid not."

"It's a pity. Well, we'll take the short cut then through Sievering."

They lit their lamps and pushed their cycles through the forest in a long serpentine. One tree after another in succession sprang out of the darkness into the radiance of the globes of light and retreated again into the night. The wind soughed through the foliage with increased force and the leaves rustled underneath. Heinrich felt a quite gentle fear, such as frequently came over him when it was dark in the open country. He felt, as it were, disillusioned at the thought of having to spend the evening alone. He was in a bad temper with George, and was irritated into the bargain at the latter's reserve towards himself. He resolved also, and not for the first time, not to discuss his own personal affairs with George any more. It was better so. He did not need to confide in anybody or obtain anybody's sympathy. He had always felt at his best when he had gone his own way alone. He had found that out often enough. Why then reveal his soul to another? He needed acquaintances to go walks and excursions with, and to discuss all the manifold problems of life and art in cold shrewd fashion — he needed women for a fleeting embrace; but he needed no friend and no mistress. In that way his life would pass with greater dignity and serenity. He revelled in these resolutions, and felt a growing consciousness of toughness and superiority. The darkness of the forest lost its terror, and he walked through the gently rustling night as though through a kindred element.

The height was soon reached. The dark sky lay starless over the grey road and the haze-breathing fields that stretched on both sides towards the deceptive distance of the wooded hills. A light was shining from a toll-house quite near them. They mounted their cycles again and rode back as quickly as the darkness permitted. George wished to be soon at the journey's end. It struck him as strangely unreal that he was to see again in an hour and a half that quiet room which no one else knew of besides Anna and himself; that dark room with the oil-prints on the wall, the blue velvet sofa, the cottage piano, on which stood the photographs of unknown people and a bust of Schiller in white plaster; with its high narrow windows, opposite which the old dark grey church towered aloft.

Lamps were burning all the way along. The roads again became more open and they were given a last view of the heights. Then they went at top speed, first between well-kept villas, finally through a populous noisy main road until they got deeper into the town. They got off at the Votive Church.

“Good-bye,” said George, “and I hope to see you again in the café to-morrow.”

“I don’t know...” replied Heinrich, and as George looked at him questioningly he added: “It is possible that I shall go away.”

“I say, that is a sudden decision.”

“Yes, one gets caught sometimes by....”

“Lovesickness,” filled in George with a smile.

“Or fear,” said Heinrich with a short laugh.

“You certainly have no cause for that,” said George.

“Do you know for certain?” asked Heinrich.

“You told us so yourself.”

“What!”

“That you have news every day.”

“Yes, that is quite true, every day. I get tender ardent letters. Every day by the same post. But what does that prove? Why, I write letters which are yet more ardent and even more tender and yet....”

“Yes,” said George, who understood him. And he hazarded the question: “Why don’t you stay with her?”

Heinrich shrugged his shoulders. “Tell me yourself, George, wouldn’t it strike you as slightly humorous for a man to burn his boats on account of a love affair like that and trot about the world with a little actress....”

“Personally, I should regret it very much... but humorous... where does the humour come in?”

“No, I have no desire to do it,” said Heinrich in a hard voice.

“But if you... but if you were to take it very seriously... if you asked her point blank... mightn’t the young lady perhaps give up her career?”

“Possibly, but I am not going to ask her, I don’t want to ask her. No, better pain than responsibility.”

“Would it be such a great responsibility?” asked George. “What I mean is... is the girl’s talent so pronounced, is she really so keen on her art, that it would be really a sacrifice for her to give the thing up.”

“Has she got talent?” said Heinrich. “Why, I don’t know myself. Why, I even think she is the one creature in the world about whose talent I would not trust myself to give an opinion. Every time I have seen her on the stage her voice has rung in my ears like the voice of an unknown person, and as though, too, it came from a greater distance than all the other voices. It is really quite remarkable.... But you are bound to have seen her act, George. What’s your impression? Tell me quite frankly.”

“Well, quite frankly... I don’t remember her properly. You’ll excuse me, I didn’t know then, you see.... When you talk of her I always see in my mind’s eye a head of reddish-blonde hair that falls a little over the forehead — and very big black roving eyes with a small pale face.”

“Yes, roving eyes,” repeated Heinrich, bit his lips and was silent for a while. “Good-bye,” he said suddenly.

“You’ll be sure to write to me?” asked George.

“Yes, of course. Any way I am bound to be coming back again,” he added, and smiled stiffly.

“*Bon voyage*,” said George, and shook hands with him with unusual affection. This did Heinrich good. This warm pressure of the hand not only made him suddenly certain that George did not think him ridiculous, but also, strangely enough, that his distant mistress was faithful to him and that he himself was a man who could take more liberties with life than many others.

George looked after him as he hurried off on his cycle. He felt again as he had felt a few hours before, on Leo’s departure, that some one was vanishing into an unknown land; and he realised at this moment that in spite of all the sympathy he felt for both of them he would never attain with either that unrestrained sense of

intimacy which had united him last year with Guido Schönstein and previously with poor Labinski.

He reflected whether perhaps the fundamental reason for this was not perhaps the difference of race between him and them, and he asked himself whether leaving out of account the conversation between the two of them, he would of his own initiative have realised so clearly this feeling of aloofness. He doubted it. Did he not as a matter of fact feel himself nearer, yes even more akin, to these two and to many others of their race than to many men who came from the same stock as his own? Why, did he not feel quite distinctly that deep down somewhere there were many stronger threads of sympathy running between him and those two men, than between him and Guido or perhaps even his own brother? But if that was so, would he not have been bound to have taken some opportunity this afternoon to have said as much to those two men? to have appealed to them? “Just trust me, don’t shut me out. Just try to treat me as a friend....” And as he asked himself why he had not done it, and why he had scarcely taken any part in their conversation, he realised with astonishment that during the whole time he had not been able to shake off a kind of guilty consciousness of having not been free during his whole life from a certain hostility towards the foreigners, as Leo called them himself, a kind of wanton hostility which was certainly not justified by his own personal experience, and had thus contributed his own share to that distrust and defiance with which so many persons, whom he himself might have been glad to take an opportunity to approach, had shut themselves off from him. This thought roused an increasing *malaise* within him which he could not properly analyse, and which was simply the dull realisation that clean relations could not flourish even between clean men in an atmosphere of folly, injustice and disingenuousness.

He rode homewards faster and faster, as though that would make him escape this feeling of depression. Arrived home, he changed quickly, so as not to keep Anna waiting too long. He longed for her as he had never done before. He felt as though he had come home from a far journey to the one being who wholly belonged to him.

IV



GEORGE STOOD BY the window. The stone backs of the bearded giants who bore on their powerful arms the battered armorial bearings of a long-past race were arched just beneath him. Straight opposite, out of the darkness of ancient houses the steps crept up to the door of the old grey church which loomed amid the falling flakes of snow as though behind a moving curtain. The light of a street lamp on the square shone palely through the waning daylight. The snowy street beneath, which, though centrally situated, was remote from all bustle, was even quieter than usual on this holiday afternoon, and George felt once more, as indeed he always did when he ascended the broad staircase of the old palace that had been transformed into an apartment house, and stepped into the spacious room with its low-arched ceiling, that he was escaping from his usual world and had entered the other half of his wonderful double life.

He heard a key grating in the door and turned round. Anna came in. George clasped her ecstatically in his arms, and kissed her on the forehead and mouth. Her dark-blue jacket, her broad-rimmed hat, her fur boa were all covered with snow.

"You have been working then," said Anna, as she took off her things and pointed to the table where music paper with writing on it lay close to the green-shaded lamp.

"I have just looked through the quintette, the first movement, there is still a lot to do to it."

"But it will be extraordinarily fine then."

"We'll hope so. Do you come from home, Anna?"

"No, from Bittner's."

"What, to-day, Sunday?"

"Yes, the two girls have got a lot behind-hand through the measles, and that has to be made up. I am very pleased too, for money reasons for one thing."

"Making your fortune!"

"And then one escapes for an hour or two at any rate from the happy home."

"Yes," said George, put Anna's boa over the back of a chair and stroked the fur nervously with his fingers. Anna's remark, in which he could detect a gentle reproach, as it were, a reproach too which he had heard before, gave him an unpleasant feeling. She sat down on the sofa, put her hands on her temples, stroked her dark blonde wavy hair backwards and looked at George with a smile. He stood leaning on the chest of drawers, with both hands in his jacket pocket, and began to tell her of the previous evening, which he had spent with Guido and his violinist. The young lady had, at the Count's wish, been for some weeks taking instruction in the Catholic religion with the confessor of an Arch-duchess; she, on her side, made Guido read Nietzsche and Ibsen. But according to George's account the only result of this course of study which one could report so far was that the Count had developed the habit of nicknaming his Mistress "the Rattenmamsell," after that wonderful character out of *Little Eyolf*.

Anna had nothing very bright to communicate about her last evening. They had had visitors. "First," Anna told him, "my mother's two cousins, then an office friend of my father's to play tarok. Even Josef was domesticated for once and lay on the sofa from three to five. Then his latest pal, Herr Jalaudek, who paid me quite a lot of attention."

"Really, really."

"He *was* fascinating. I'll just tell you: a violet cravat with yellow spots which puts yours quite into the

shade. He paid me the honour too of suggesting that I should help him in a so-called charity-performance at the 'Wild Man,' for the benefit of the Wahringer Church Building Society."

"Of course you accepted?"

"I excused myself on account of my lack of voice and want of religious feeling."

"So far as the voice is concerned...."

She interrupted him. "No, George," she said lightly, "I have given up that hope at last."

He looked at her and tried to read her glance, but it remained clear and free. The organ from the church sounded softly and dully.

"Right," said George, "I have brought you the ticket for to-morrow's 'Carmen.'"

"Thanks very much," she answered, and took the card. "Are you going too, dear?"

"Yes, I have a box in the third tier, and I have asked Bermann to come. I am taking the music with me, as I did the other day at Lohengrin, and I shall practise conducting again. At the back, of course. You can have no idea what you learn that way. I should like to make a suggestion," he added hesitatingly. "Won't you come and have supper somewhere with me and Bermann after the theatre?"

She was silent.

He continued: "I should really like it if you got to know him better. With all his faults he is an interesting fellow and...."

"I am not a Rattenmamsell," she interrupted sharply, while her face immediately assumed its stiff conventional expression.

George compressed the corners of his mouth. "That doesn't apply to me, my dear child. There are many points of difference between Guido and me. But as you like." He walked up and down the room.

She remained sitting on the ottoman. "So you are going to Ehrenbergs' this evening?" she asked.

"You know I am. I have already refused twice recently, and I couldn't very well do so this time."

"You needn't make any excuses, George, I am invited too."

"Where to?"

"I am going to Ehrenbergs' too."

"Really?" he exclaimed involuntarily.

"Why are you so surprised?" she asked sharply; "it is clear that they don't yet know that I am not fit to be associated with any more."

"My dear Anna, what is the matter with you to-day? Why are you so touchy? Supposing they did know... do you think that would prevent people from inviting you? Quite the contrary. I am convinced that you would really go up in Frau Ehrenberg's respect."

"And the sweet Else, I suppose, would positively envy me. Don't you think so? Anyway, she wrote me quite a nice letter. Here it is. Won't you read it?" George ran his eye over it, thought its kindness was somewhat deliberate, made no further remark and gave it back to Anna.

"Here is another one too, if it interests you."

"From Doctor Stauber. Indeed? Would he mind if he knew that you gave it to me to read?"

"Why are you so considerate all of a sudden?" and as though to punish him she added, "there are probably a great many things that he would mind."

George read the letter quickly through to himself. Berthold described in his dry way, with an occasional tinge of humour, the progress of his work at the Pasteur Institute, his walks, his excursions and the theatres he had visited, and quite a lot of remarks also of a general character. But in spite of his eight pages the letter did not contain the slightest allusion to either past or future. George asked casually "How long is he staying in

Paris?"

"As you see he doesn't write a single word about his return."

"Your friend Therese was recently of opinion that his colleagues in the party would like to have him back again."

"Oh, has she been in the café again?"

"Yes. I spoke to her there two or three days ago. She really amuses me a great deal."

"Really?"

"She starts off, of course, by always being very superior, even with me. Presumably because I am one of those who rot away their life with art and silly things like that, while there are so many more important things to do in the world. But when she warms up a bit it turns out that she is every bit as interested as we ordinary people in all kinds of silly things."

"She easily gets warmed up," said Anna imperturbably.

George walked up and down and went on speaking. "She was really magnificent the other day at the fencing tournament in the Musikverein rooms. By-the-bye, who was the gentleman who was up there in the gallery with her?"

Anna shrugged her shoulders. "I did not have the privilege of being at the tournament, and besides, I don't know all Therese's cavaliers."

"I presume," said George, "it was a comrade, in every sense of the term. At any rate he was very glum and was pretty badly dressed. When Therese clapped Felician's victory he positively collapsed with jealousy."

"What did Therese really tell you about Doctor Berthold?" asked Anna.

"Ho, ho!" said George jestingly, "the lady still appears to be keenly interested."

Anna did not answer.

"Well," reported George, "I can give you the information that they want to make him stand in the autumn for the Landtag. I can quite understand it too, in view of his brilliant gifts as a speaker."

"What do you know about it? Have you ever heard him speak?"

"Of course I have; don't you remember? At your place."

"There is really no occasion for you to make fun of him."

"I assure you I'd no idea of doing so."

"I noticed at once that he struck you at the time as somewhat funny. He and his father, too. Why, you immediately ran away from them."

"Not at all, Anna. You are doing me a great injustice in making such insinuations."

"They may have their weaknesses, both of them, but at any rate they belong to the people whom one can count on. And that is something."

"Have I disputed that, Anna? Upon my word, I have never heard you talk so illogically. What do you want me to do then? Did you want me by any chance to be jealous about that letter?"

"Jealous? that would be the finishing touch. You with your past."

George shrugged his shoulders. Memories swam up in his mind of similar wrangles in the course of previous relationships, memories of those mysterious sudden discords and estrangements which usually simply meant the beginning of the end. Had he really got as far as all that already with his good sensible Anna? He walked up and down the room moodily and almost depressed. At times he threw a fleeting glance towards his love who sat silent in her corner of the sofa, rubbing her hands lightly as though she were cold. The organ rang out more heavily than before in the silence of the room that had suddenly become so melancholy; the voices of singing men became audible and the window-panes rattled softly. George's glance

fell on the little Christmas-tree which stood on the sideboard and whose candles had burnt the evening before last for the benefit of Anna and himself. Half-bored, half-nervous, he took a wooden vesta out of his pocket and began to light the little candles one after another.

Then Anna's voice suddenly rang out to him. "There is no one I should prefer to old Doctor Stauber to confide in about anything serious."

George turned coldly towards her and blew out a burning vesta which he still held in his hand. He knew immediately what Anna meant, and felt surprised that he had never given it another thought since their last meeting. He went up to her and took hold of her hand. Now for the first time she looked up. Her expression was impenetrable, her features immobile. "I say, Anna...." He sat down by her side on the ottoman with both her hands in his.

She was silent.

"Why don't you speak?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "There is nothing new to tell you," she explained simply.

"I see," he said slowly. It passed through his mind that her strange sensitiveness to-day was to be regarded as symptomatic of the condition to which she was alluding, and the uneasiness in his soul increased. "But you can't tell definitely for a good time yet," he said in a somewhat cooler tone than he really meant. "And... even supposing..." he added with artificial cheerfulness.

"So you would forgive me?" she asked with a smile.

He pressed her to him and suddenly felt quite transported. A vivid and almost pathetic feeling of love flamed up in him for the soft good creature whom he held in his arms, and who could never occasion him, he felt deeply convinced, any serious suffering. "It really wouldn't be so bad," he said cheerily, "you would just leave Vienna for a time, that's all."

"Well, it certainly wouldn't be as simple as you seem all of a sudden to think it would."

"Why not? You can soon find an excuse; besides, whom does it concern? Us two. No one else. But as far as I am concerned. I can get away any day as you know; can stay away too as long as I want to. I have not yet signed any contract for next year," he added with a smile. He then got up to put out the Christmas candles, whose tiny flames had almost burnt down to the end, and went on speaking with increasing liveliness. "It would be positively delightful; just think of it, Anna! We should go away at the end of February or the beginning of March. South, of course, Italy, or perhaps the sea. We would stay at some quiet place where no one knows us, in a beautiful hotel with enormous grounds. And wouldn't one be able to work there, by Jove?"

"So that's why!" she said, as though she suddenly understood him. He laughed, held her more tightly in his arms and she pressed herself against his breast. There was no longer any noise from outside. The last sounds of the organ and the men's voices had died away. The snow curtains swept down in front of the window.... George and Anna were happy as they had never been before.

While they were at peace in the darkness he spoke about his musical plans for the near future, and told her, so far as he was able, about Heinrich's opera plot. The room became filled with shimmering shadows. The clatter of a wedding-feast swept through the fantastic hall of an ancient king. A passionate youth stole in and thrust his dagger into the prince. A dark sentence was pronounced more sinister than death itself. A sluggish ship sailed on a darkling flood towards an unknown goal. At the youth's feet there rested a princess, who had once been the betrothed of a duke. An unknown man approached the shining boat with strange tidings; fools, star-gazers, dancers, courtiers swept past. Anna had listened in silence. When he had finished George was curious to learn what impression the fleeting pictures had made upon her.

"I can't say properly," she replied. "I certainly feel quite puzzled to-day, how you are going to make

anything real out of this more or less fantastic stuff."

"Of course you can't realise it yet to-day — particularly after just hearing me describe it.... But you do feel, don't you? the musical atmosphere. I have already noted down a few *motifs* — and I should be really very glad if Bermann would soon get to work seriously."

"If I were you, George... may I tell you something?"

"Of course, fire ahead."

"Well, if I were you, I'd first get the quintette really finished. It can't want much doing to it now."

"Not much, and yet... besides, you mustn't forget that I've started all kinds of other things lately. The two pianoforte pieces, then the orchestra *scherzo* — I've already got pretty far with that. But it certainly ought to be made part of a symphony."

Anna made no answer. George noticed that her thoughts were roving, and he asked her where she had run away to this time.

"Not so far," she replied; "it only just passed through my mind what a lot of things can happen before the opera is really ready."

"Yes," said George slowly, with a slight trace of embarrassment. "If one could just look into the future."

She sighed quite softly and he pressed her nearer to him, almost as though he pitied her. "Don't worry, my darling, don't worry," he said. "I am here all right, and I always shall be here." He thought he felt what she was thinking; can't he say anything better than that?... anything stronger? anything to take away all my fear — take it away from me for ever? And he asked her disingenuously, as though conscious of running a risk: "What are you thinking of?" And as she was obstinately silent he said once more: "Anna, what are you thinking of?"

"Something very strange," she answered gently.

"What is it?"

"That the house is already built, where it will come into the world — that we have no idea where... that is what I couldn't help thinking of."

"Thinking of that!" he said, strangely moved. And pressing her to his heart with a love that flamed up afresh, "I will never desert you, you two...."

When the room was lighted again they were in very good spirits, plucked the last forgotten sweets from the branches of the little Christmas-tree and looked forward to their next meeting among people who were absolutely indifferent to them, as though it were quite a jolly adventure, laughed and talked exuberant nonsense.

As soon as Anna had gone away George locked his music manuscript up in a drawer, put out the lamp and opened the window. The snow was falling lightly and thinly. An old man was coming up the steps and his laboured breathing sounded through the still air. Opposite the silent church towered aloft... George remained awhile standing at the window. He felt almost convinced at this moment that Anna was mistaken in her surmise. He felt almost reassured as there came into his mind that remark of Leo Golowski's that Anna was destined to end her days in respectable middle-class life. Having a child by a lover really could not be part of her fate line. It was not part of his fate line either to carry the burden of serious obligation, to be tied fast from to-day and perhaps for all time to a person of the other sex; to become a father when he was still so young, a father... the word sank into his soul, oppressive, almost sinister.

He went into the Ehrenbergs' drawing-room at eight o'clock in the evening. He was met by the sound of waltz music. Old Eissler sat at the piano with his long grey beard almost drooping on to the keys. George remained at the entrance in order not to disturb him, and met welcoming glances from every quarter. Old

Eissler was playing his celebrated Viennese dances and songs with a soft touch and powerful rhythm, and George enjoyed, as he always did, the sweet crooning melodies.

"Splendid," said Frau Ehrenberg, when the old man got up.

"Keep your big words for great occasions, Leonie," answered Eissler, whose time-honoured privilege it was to call all women and girls by their Christian names. And it seemed to do everybody good to hear themselves spoken to by this handsome old man with his deep ringing voice, in which there quivered frequently, as it were, a sentimental echo of the vivid days of his youth.

George asked him if all his compositions had appeared in print.

"Very few, dear Baron. Unfortunately I can scarcely write a single note."

"It would certainly be an awful pity if these charming melodies were to be absolutely lost."

"Yes, I have often told him that," put in Frau Ehrenberg, "but unfortunately he is one of those men who have never taken themselves quite seriously."

"No, that is a mistake, Leonie. You know how I began my artistic career: I wanted to compose a great opera. Of course I was seventeen years old at the time and madly in love with a great singer."

Frau Oberberger's voice rang out from the table towards the corner: "I am sure it was a chorus girl."

"You are making a mistake, Katerina," answered Eissler. "Chorus girls were never my line. It was, as a matter of fact, a platonic love, like most of the great passions of my life."

"Were you so clumsy?" queried Frau Oberberger.

"I was often that as well," replied Eissler, in his sonorous voice and with dignity. "For as far as I can see I could have had as much luck as a hussar riding-master, but I don't regret having been clumsy."

Frau Ehrenberger nodded appreciatively.

"Then one would not be making a mistake, Herr Eissler," remarked Nürnberger, "if one attributed the chief part in your life to melancholy memories?"

Frau Ehrenberger nodded again. She was delighted whenever any one was witty in her drawing-room.

"Why did you say," she inquired, "that you could have had as much happiness as a hussar riding-master? It is not true for a minute that officers have any particular luck with women, even though my sister-in-law once had an affair with a First-Lieutenant...."

"I don't believe in platonic love," said Sissy, and beamed through the room.

Frau Wyner gave a slight shriek.

"Fräulein Sissy is probably right," said Nürnberger; "at any rate I am convinced that most women take platonic love either as an insult or an excuse."

"There are young girls here," Frau Ehrenberg reminded him gently.

"One sees that already," said Nürnberger, "from the fact of their joining in the conversation."

"All the same, I would like to take the liberty of adding a little anecdote to the chapter of platonic love," said Heinrich.

"But not a Jewish one," put in Else.

"Of course not. A blonde little girl...."

"That proves nothing," interrupted Else.

"Please let him finish his story," remonstrated Frau Ehrenberg.

"Well then, a blonde little girl," began Heinrich again, "once expressed her conviction to me, quite different, you see, from Fräulein Sissy, that platonic love did, as a matter of fact, exist, and do you know what she suggested as a proof of it? giving... an experience out of her own life. She had, you know, once spent a whole hour in a room with a lieutenant and...."

“That is enough!” cried Frau Ehrenberg nervously.

“And,” finished Heinrich, quite unperturbed and in a reassuring voice, “nothing at all happened in that hour.”

“So the blonde girl says,” added Else.

The door opened. George saw a strange lady enter in a clear blue square-cut dress, pale, simple and dignified. It was only when she smiled that he realised that the lady was Anna Rosner, and he felt something like pride in her.

When he shook hands with his love he felt Else’s look turn towards him.

They went into the next room, where the table was laid with a moderate show of festivity. The son of the house was not there. He was at Neuhaus at his father’s factory. But Herr Ehrenberg suddenly turned up at the table when the supper was served. He had just come back from his travels, which as a matter of fact had taken him to Palestine. When he was asked by Hofrat Wilt about his experiences he was at first reluctant to let himself go; finally it turned out that he had been disappointed in the scenery, annoyed by the fatigue of the journey, and had practically seen nothing of the Jewish settlements which, according to reliable information, were in process of springing up.

“So we have some ground to hope,” remarked Nürnberger, “that we may keep you here even in the event of a Jewish state being founded in the imminent future?”

Ehrenberg answered brusquely: “Did I ever tell you that I intended to emigrate? I am too old for that.”

“Really,” said Nürnberger, “I didn’t know that you had only visited the district for the benefit of Fräulein Else and Herr Oskar.”

“I am not going to quarrel with you, my dear Nürnberger. Zionism is really too good to serve as small talk at meals.”

“We’ll take it for granted,” said Hofrat Wilt, “that it is too good, but it is certainly too complicated, if only for the reason that everybody understands something different by it.”

“Or wants to understand,” added Nürnberger, “as is usually the case with most catchwords, not only in politics either — that’s why there is so much twaddle talked in the world.”

Heinrich explained that of all human creatures the politician represented in his eyes the most enigmatic phenomenon. “I can understand,” he said, “pickpockets, acrobats, bank — directors, hotel — proprietors, kings... I mean I can manage without any particular trouble to put myself into the souls of all these people. Of course the logical result is that I should only need certain alterations in degree, though no doubt enormous ones, to qualify myself to play in the world the rôle of acrobat, king or bank-director. On the other hand I have an infallible feeling that even if I could raise myself to the *n*th power I could never become what one calls a politician, a leader of a party, a member, a minister.”

Nürnberger smiled at Heinrich’s theory of the politician representing a particular type of humanity, inasmuch as it was only one of the superficial and by no means essential attributes of his profession to pose as a special human type, and to hide his greatness or his insignificance, his feats or his idleness behind labels, abstractions and symbols. What the nonentities or charlatans among them represented, why, that was obvious: they were simply business people or swindlers or glib speakers, but the people who really counted, the people who did things — the real geniuses of course, they at the bottom of their souls were simply artists. They too tried to create a work, and one, too, that raised in the sphere of ideas quite as much claim to immortality and permanent value as any other work of art. The only difference was that the material in which they worked was one that was not rigid or relatively stable, like tones or words, but that, like living men, it was in a continual state of flux and movement.

Willy Eissler appeared, apologised to his hostess for being late, sat down between Sissy and Frau Oberberger and greeted his father like a friend long lost. It turned out that though they both lived together they had not seen each other for several days.

Willy was complimented all round on his success in the aristocratic amateur performance where he had played the part of a marquis with the Countess Liebenburg-Rathony in a French one-act play. Frau Oberberger asked him, in a voice sufficiently loud for her neighbours to catch it, where his assignations with the countess took place and if he received her in the same *pied-à-terre* quarter as his more middle-class flames. The conversation became more lively, dialogues were exchanged and became intertwined all over the room.

But George caught isolated snatches, including part of a conversation between Anna and Heinrich which dealt with Therese Golowski. He noticed at the same time that Anna would occasionally throw a dark inquisitive look at Demeter Stanzides, who had appeared to-night in evening dress with a gardenia in his buttonhole; and though he had no actual consciousness of jealousy he felt strangely affected. He wondered if at this moment she was really thinking that she was perhaps bearing a child by him under her bosom. The idea of "the depths..." came to him again. She suddenly looked over to him with a smile, as though she were coming home from a journey. He felt an inner sense of relief and appreciated with a slight shock how much he loved her. Then he raised his glass to his lips and drank to her. Else, who up to this time had been chatting with her other neighbour Demeter, now turned to George. With her deliberately casual manner and with a look towards Anna she remarked: "She does look pretty, so womanly. But that's always been her line. Do you still do music together?"

"Frequently," replied George coolly.

"Perhaps I'll ask you to start accompanying me again at the beginning of the new year. I don't know why we have not done so before."

George was silent.

"And how are you getting on" — she threw a look at Heinrich— "with your opera?"

"Nothing is done so far. Who knows if anything will come of it?"

"Of course nothing will come of it."

George smiled. "Why are you so stern with me to-day?"

"I am very angry with you."

"With me! Why?"

"That you always go on giving people occasion to regard you as a dilettante."

This was a home thrust. George actually felt a slight sense of malice against Else, then quickly pulled himself together and answered: "That perhaps is just what I am. And if one isn't a genius it is much better to be an honest dilettante than... than an artist with a swollen head."

"Nobody wants you to do great things all at once, but all the same one really should not let oneself go in the way you do in both your inner and your outward life."

"I really don't understand you, Else. How can one contend.... Do you know that I am going to Germany in the autumn as a conductor?"

"Your career will be ruined by your not turning up to the rehearsals at ten o'clock sharp."

The taunt was still gnawing at George. "And who called me a dilettante, if I may ask?"

"Who did? Good gracious, why it has already been in the papers."

"Really," said George feeling reassured, for he now remembered that after the concert in which Fräulein Bellini had sung his songs a critic had described him as an aristocratic dilettante. George's friends had

explained at the time that the reason for this malicious critique was that he had omitted to call on the gentleman in question, who was notoriously vain. So that was it once again. There were always extrinsic reasons for people criticising one unfavourably, and Else's touchiness to-day, what was it at bottom but sheer jealousy....

The table was cleared. They went into the drawing-room.

George went up to Anna, who was leaning on the piano, and said gently to her: "You do look beautiful, dear."

She nodded with satisfaction.

He then went on to ask: "Did you have a pleasant talk with Heinrich? What did you speak about? Therese, isn't that so?"

She did not answer, and George noticed with surprise that her eyelids suddenly drooped and that she began to totter. "What is the matter?" he asked, frightened.

She did not hear him, and would have fallen down if he had not quickly caught hold of her by the wrists. At the same moment Frau Ehrenberg and Else came up to her.

"Did they notice us?" thought George.

Anna had already opened her eyes again, gave a forced smile and whispered: "Oh, it is nothing. I often stand the heat so badly."

"Come along!" said Frau Ehrenberg in a motherly tone. "Perhaps you will lie down for a moment."

Anna, who seemed dazed, made no answer and the ladies of the house escorted her into an adjoining room.

George looked round. The guests did not seem to have noticed anything. Coffee was handed round. George took a cup and played nervously with his spoon. "So after all," he thought, "she will not finish up in middle-class life." But at the same time he felt as far away from her psychologically, as though the matter had no personal interest for him.

Frau Oberberger came up to him. "Well, what do you really think about platonic love? You are an expert, you know."

He answered absent-mindedly. She went on talking, as was her way, without bothering whether he was listening or answering. Suddenly Else returned. George inquired how Anna was, with polite sympathy.

"I am certain it is not anything serious," said Else and looked him strangely in the face.

Demeter Stanzides came in and asked her to sing.

"Will you accompany me?" She turned to George.

He bowed and sat down at the piano.

"What shall it be?" asked Else.

"Anything you like," replied Wilt, "but nothing modern." After supper he liked to play the reactionary at any rate in artistic matters.

"Right you are," said Else, and gave George a piece of music.

She sang the *Das Alte Bild* of Hugo Wolf in her small well-trained and somewhat pathetic voice. George played a refined accompaniment, though he felt somewhat *distrait*. In spite of his efforts he could not help feeling a little annoyed about Anna. After all no one seemed to have really noticed the incident except Frau Ehrenberg and Else.

After all, what did it really come to?... Supposing they did all know?... Whom did it concern? Yes, who bothered about it? Why, they are all listening to Else now, he continued mentally, and appreciating the beauty of this song. Even Frau Oberberger, though she is not a bit musical, is forgetting that she is a woman for a few minutes and her face is quiet and sexless. Even Heinrich is listening spell-bound and perhaps for the

moment is neither thinking of his work, nor of the fate of the Jews, nor of his distant mistress. Is perhaps not even giving a single thought to his present mistress, the little blonde girl, to please whom he has recently begun to dress smartly. As a matter of fact he does not look at all bad in evening dress, and his tie is not a ready-made one, such as he usually wears, but is carefully tied.... Who is standing so close behind me? thought George, so that I can feel her breath over my hair.... Perhaps Sissy.... If the world were to be destroyed to-morrow morning it would be Sissy whom I should choose for to-night. Yes, I am sure of it. And there goes Anna with Frau Ehrenberg; it seems I am the only one who notices it, although I have got to attend simultaneously to both my own playing and Else's singing. I welcome her with my eyes. Yes, I welcome you, mother of my child.... How strange life is!...

The song was at an end. The company applauded and asked for more. George played Else's accompaniment to some other songs by Schumann, by Brahms; and finally, by general request, two of his own, which had become distasteful to him personally, since somebody or other had suggested that they were reminiscent of Mendelssohn.

While he was accompanying he felt that he was losing all touch with Else and therefore made a special effort in his playing to win back again her sense of sympathy. He played with exaggerated sensibility, he specifically wooed her and felt that it was in vain. For the first time in his life he was her unhappy lover.

The applause after George's songs was great.

"That was your best period," said Else gently to him while she put the music away, "two or three years ago."

The others made kind remarks to him without going into distinctions about the periods of his artistic development.

Nürnberger declared that he had been most agreeably disillusioned by George's songs. "I will not conceal the fact from you," he remarked, "that going by the views I have frequently heard you express, my dear Baron, I should have imagined them considerably less intelligible."

"Quite charming, really," said Wilt, "all so simple and melodious without bombast or affectation."

"And he is the man," thought George grimly, "who dubbed me a dilettante."

Willy came up to him. "Now you just say, Herr Hofrat, that you can manage to whistle them, and if I know anything about physiognomy the Baron will send two gentlemen to see you in the morning."

"Oh no," said George, pulling himself together and smiling; "fortunately, the songs were written in a period which I have long since got over, so I don't feel wounded by any blame or by any praise."

A servant brought in ices, the groups broke up and Anna stood alone with George by the pianoforte.

He asked her quickly "What does it really mean?"

"I don't know," she replied, and looked at him in astonishment.

"Do you feel quite all right now?"

"Absolutely," she answered.

"And is to-day the first time you have had anything like it?" asked George, somewhat hesitatingly.

She answered: "I had something like it yesterday evening at home. It was a kind of faintness. It lasted some time longer, while we were sitting at supper, but nobody noticed it."

"But why did you tell me nothing about it?"

She shrugged her shoulders lightly.

"I say, Anna dear," he said, and smiled guiltily, "I would like to have a word with you at any rate. Give me a signal when you want to go away. I will clear out a few minutes before you, and will wait by the Schwarzenbergplatz till you come along in a fly. I'll get in and we will go for a little drive. Does that suit

you?”

She nodded.

He said: “Good-bye, darling,” and went into the smoking-room.

Old Ehrenberg, Nürnberger and Wilt had sat down at a green card-table to play tarok. Old Eissler and his son were sitting opposite each other in two enormous green leather arm-chairs and were utilising the opportunity to have a good chat with one another after all this time. George took a cigarette out of a box, lighted it and looked at the pictures on the wall with particular interest. He saw Willy’s name written in pale red letters down below in the corner on the green field in a water-colour painted in the grotesque style, that represented a hurdle race ridden by gentlemen in red hunting-coats. He turned involuntarily to the young man and said: “I never knew that one before.”

“It is fairly new,” remarked Willy lightly.

“Smart picture, eh?” said old Eissler.

“Oh, something more than that,” replied George.

“Yes, I hope to be able to look forward to doing something better than that,” said Willy.

“He is going to Africa, lion hunting,” explained old Eissler, “with Prince Wangenheim. Felician is also supposed to be of the party, but he has not yet decided.”

“Why not?” asked Willy.

“He wants to pass his diplomatic examination in the spring.”

“But that could be put off,” said Willy; “lions are dying out, but unfortunately one can’t say the same thing of professors.”

“Book me for a picture, Willy,” called out Ehrenberg from the card-table.

“You play the Mæcenas later on, father Ehrenberg?” said Willy. “As I’ve said, I’ll take you two on.” [A reference to the Faro game]

“Raise you,” replied Ehrenberg, and continued: “If I can order anything for myself, Willy, please paint me a desert landscape showing Prince Wangenheim being gobbled up by the lions... but as realistic as possible.”

“You are making a mistake about the person, Herr Ehrenberg,” said Willy; “the celebrated Anti-Semite you are referring to is the cousin of my Wangenheim.”

“For all I care,” replied Ehrenberg, “the lions, too, may be making a mistake. Every Anti-Semite, you know, isn’t bound to be celebrated.”

“You will ruin the party if you don’t look out,” admonished Nürnberger.

“You should have bought an estate and settled in Palestine,” said Hofrat Wilt.

“God save me from that,” replied Ehrenberg.

“Well, since he has done that in everything up to the present,” said Nürnberger, and put down his hand.

“It seems to me, Nürnberger, that you are reproaching me again for not goin’ about peddlin’ ole clo’.”

“Then you would certainly have the right to complain of Anti-Semitism,” said Nürnberger, “for who feels anything of it in Austria except the peddlars... only they, one might almost say.”

“And some people with a sense of self-respect,” retorted Ehrenberg. “Twenty-seven... thirty-one... thirty-eight.... Well, who’s won the game?”

Willy had gone back into the drawing-room again. George sat smoking on the arm of an easy-chair. He suddenly noticed old Eissler’s look directed towards him in a strange benevolent manner and felt himself reminded of something without knowing what.

“I had a few words the other day,” said the old gentleman, “with your brother Felician at Schönstein’s; it is striking how you resemble your poor father, especially to one like me, who knew your father as a young

man."

It flashed across George at once what old Eissler's look reminded him of. Old Doctor Stauber's eyes had rested on him at Rosner's with the same fatherly expression.

"These old Jews!" he thought sarcastically, but in a remote corner of his soul he felt somewhat moved. It came into his mind that his father had often gone for morning walks in the Prater with Eissler, for whose knowledge of art he had had a great respect. Old Eissler went on speaking.

"You, George, take after your mother more, I think."

"Many say so. It is very hard to judge, oneself."

"They say your mother had such a beautiful voice."

"Yes, in her early youth. I myself never really heard her sing. Of course she tried now and again. Two or three years before her death a doctor in Meran even advised her to practise singing. The idea was that it should be a good exercise for her lungs, but unfortunately it wasn't much of a success."

Old Eissler nodded and looked in front of him. "I suppose you probably won't be able to remember that my poor wife was in Meran at the same time as your late mother?"

George racked his memory. It had escaped him.

"I once travelled in the same compartment as your father," said old Eissler, "at night time. We were both unable to sleep. He told me a great deal about you two — you and Felician I mean."

"Really...."

"For instance, that when you were a boy you had played one of your own compositions to some Italian *virtuoso*, and that he had foretold a great future for you."

"Great future.... Great heavens, but it wasn't a virtuoso, Herr Eissler. It was a clergyman, from whom, as a matter of fact, I learned to play the organ."

Eissler continued: "And in the evening, when your mother had gone to bed, you would often improvise for hours on end in the room."

George nodded and sighed quietly. It seemed as though he had had much more talent at that time. "Work!" he thought ardently, "work!..."

He looked up again. "Yes," he said humorously, "that is always the trouble, infant prodigies so seldom come to anything."

"I hear you want to be a conductor, Baron."

"Yes," replied George resolutely, "I am going to Germany next autumn. Perhaps as an accompanist first in the municipal theatre of some little town, just as it comes along."

"But you would not have any objection to a Court theatre?"

"Of course not. What makes you say that, Herr Eissler? if it is not a rude question."

"I know quite well," said Eissler with a smile, as he dropped his monocle, "that you have not sought out my help, but I can quite appreciate on the other hand that you would not mind perhaps being able to get on without the intermediaryship of agents and others of that kind.... I don't mean because of the commissions."

George remained cold. "When one has once decided to take up a theatrical career one knows at the same time all that one's bargaining for."

"Do you know Count Malnitz by any chance?" inquired Eissler, quite unconcerned by George's air of worldly wisdom.

"Malnitz! Do you mean Count Eberhard Malnitz, who had a suite performed a few years ago?"

"Yes, I mean him."

"I don't know him personally, and as for the suite...."

With a wave of the hand Eissler dismissed the composer Malnitz. “He has been manager at Detmold since the beginning of this season,” he then said. “That is why I asked you if you knew him. He is a great friend of mine of long standing. He used to live in Vienna. For the last ten or twelve years we have been meeting every year in Carlsbad or Ischl. This year we want to make a little Mediterranean trip at Easter. Will you allow me, my dear Baron, to take an opportunity of mentioning your name to him, and telling him something about your plans to be a conductor?”

George hesitated to answer, and smiled politely.

“Oh please don’t regard my suggestion as officious, my dear Baron. If you don’t wish it, of course I will sit tight.”

“You misunderstand my silence,” replied George amiably, but not without *hauteur*; “but I really don’t know....”

“I think a little Court theatre like that,” continued Eissler, “is just the right place for you for the beginning. The fact of your belonging to the nobility won’t hurt you at all, not even with my friend Malnitz, however much he likes to play the democrat, or even at times the anarchist... with the exception of bombs, of course; but he is a charming man and really awfully musical.... Even though he isn’t exactly a composer.”

“Well,” replied George, somewhat embarrassed, “if you would have the kindness to speak to him.... I can’t afford to let any chance slip. At any rate, I thank you very much.”

“Not at all, I don’t guarantee success, it is just a chance, like any other.”

Frau Oberberger and Sissy came in, escorted by Demeter.

“What interesting conversation are we interrupting?” said Frau Oberberger. “The experienced platonic lover and the inexperienced rake? One should really have been there.”

“Don’t upset yourself, Katerina,” said Eissler, and his voice had again its deep vibrating ring. “One sometimes talks about other things, such as the future of the human race.”

Sissy put a cigarette between her lips, allowed George to give her a light and sat down in the corner of the green leather sofa. “You are not bothering about me at all to-day,” she began with that English accent of hers which George liked so well. “As though I positively didn’t exist. Yes, that’s what it is. I am really a more constant nature than you are, am I not?”

“You constant, Sissy?”... He pushed an arm-chair quite near to her. They spoke of the past summer and the one that was coming.

“Last year,” said Sissy, “you gave me your word you would come wherever I was, and you didn’t do it. This year you must keep your word.”

“Are you going into the Isle of Wight again?”

“No, I am going into the mountains this time, to the Tyrol or the Salzkammergut. I will let you know soon. Will you come?”

“But you are bound to have a large following anywhere.”

“I won’t trouble about any one except you, George.”

“Even supposing Willy Eissler happens to stay in your vicinity?”

“Oh,” she said, with a wanton smile and put out her cigarette by pressing it violently upon the glass ash-tray.

They went on talking. It was just like one of those conversations they had had so often during the last few years. It began lightly and flippantly, and eventually finished in a blaze of tender lies which were true for just one moment. George was once again fascinated by Sissy.

“I would really prefer to go travelling with you,” he whispered quite near her.

She just nodded. Her left arm rested on the broad back of the ottoman. “If one could only do as one wanted,” she said, with a look that dreamt of a hundred men.

He bent down over her trembling arm, went on speaking and became intoxicated with his own words. “Somewhere where nobody knows us, where nobody bothers about any one, that is where I should like to be with you, Sissy, many days and nights.”

Sissy shuddered. The word “nights” made her shudder with fear.

Anna appeared in the doorway, signalled to George with a look and then disappeared again. He felt an inward sense of reluctance, and yet he felt that this was just the psychological moment to leave Sissy.

In the doorway of the drawing-room he met Heinrich, who accosted him. “If you are going you might tell me, I should like to speak to you.”

“Delighted! But I must... promised to see Fräulein Rosner home, you see. I’ll come straight to the café, so till then....”

A few minutes later he was standing on the Schwarzenberg bridge. The sky was full of stars, the streets stretched out wide and silent. George turned up his coat collar, although it was no longer cold, and walked up and down. Will anything come of the Detmold business? he thought. Oh well, if it is not in Detmold it will be in some town or other. At any rate I mean real business now, and a great deal, a great deal will then lie behind me.

He tried to consider the matter quietly. How will it all turn out? We are now at the end of December. We must go away in March — at the latest. We shall be taken for a honeymoon couple. I shall go walking with her arm-in-arm in Rome and Posilippo, in Venice.... There are women who grow very ugly in that condition... but not she, no, not she.... There was always a certain touch of the mother in her appearance.... She must stay the summer in some quiet neighbourhood where no one knows her... in the Thuringian Forest perhaps, or by the Rhine.... How strangely she said that to-day. The house in which the child will come into the world is already in existence. Yes.... Somewhere in the distance, or perhaps quite near here, that house is standing.... And people are living there whom we have never seen. How strange.... When will it come into the world? At the end of the summer, about the beginning of September. By that time, too, I am bound to have gone away. How shall I manage it?... And a year from to-day the little creature will be already four months old. It will grow up... become big. There will be a young man there one fine day, my son, or a young girl; a beautiful little girl of seven, my daughter.... I shall be forty-four then.... When I am sixty-four I can be a grandfather... perhaps a director of an opera or two and a celebrated composer in spite of Else’s prophecies; but one has got to work for that, that is quite true. More than I have done so far. Else is right, I let myself go too much, I must be different... I shall too. I feel a change taking place within me. Yes, something new is taking place within me also.

A fly came out of the Heugasse, some one bent out of the window. George recognised Anna’s face under the white shawl. He was very glad, got in and kissed her hand. They enjoyed their talk, joked a little about the party from which she had just come and found it really ridiculous to spend an evening in so inept a fashion. He held her hands in his and was affected by her presence. He got out in front of her house and rung. He then came to the open door of the carriage and they arranged an appointment for the following day.

“I think we have got a lot to talk about,” said Anna.

He simply nodded. The door of the house was open. She got out of the fly, gave George a long look full of emotion and disappeared into the hall.

My love! thought George, with a feeling of happiness and pride. Life lay before him like something serious and mysterious, full of gifts and full of miracles.

When he went into the café, Heinrich was sitting in a window niche. Next to him was a pale young beardless man whom George had casually spoken to several times, in a dinner-jacket with a velvet collar but with a shirt-front of doubtful cleanliness.

When George came in the young man looked up with ardent eyes from a paper that he was holding in his restless and not very well-kept hands.

"Am I disturbing you?" said George.

"Oh, not a bit of it," replied the young man, with a crazy laugh, "the larger the audience the better."

"Herr Winternitz," explained Heinrich, as he shook hands with George, "was just reading me a series of his poems, but we will break off now." Slightly touched by the disappointed expression of the young man George assured him that he would be delighted to hear the poems if he might be permitted to do so.

"It won't last much longer," explained Winternitz gratefully. "It is only a pity that you missed the beginning. I could — —"

"What! Does it all hang together?" said Heinrich in astonishment.

"What, didn't you notice?" exclaimed Winternitz, and laughed again crazily.

"I see," said Heinrich. "So it's always the same woman character whom your poems deal with. I thought it was always a different one."

"Of course it is always the same one, but her special characteristic is that she always seems to be a fresh person."

Herr Winternitz read softly but insistently, as though inwardly consumed. It appeared from his series that he had been loved as never a man had been loved before, but also deceived as never a man had been deceived before, a circumstance which was to be attributed to certain metaphysical causes and not at all to any deficiencies in his own personality. He showed himself, however, in his last poem completely freed of his passion, and declared that he was now ready to enjoy all the pleasures, which the world could offer him. This poem had four stanzas; the last verse of every stanza began with a "hei," and it concluded with the exclamation: "Hei, so career I through the world."

George could not help recognising that the recitation had to a certain extent impressed him, and when Winternitz put the book down and looked around him with dilated pupils, George nodded appreciatively and said: "Very beautiful!"

Winternitz looked expectantly at Heinrich, who was silent for a few seconds and finally remarked: "It is fairly interesting on the whole... but why do you say 'hei,' if it isn't a rude question? Positively, no one will believe it."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Winternitz.

"Rather ask your own conscience, if you honestly mean that 'hei.' I believe all the rest which you read to me, I mean I believe it in the highest sense of the term, although not a single word is true. I believe you when you tell me that you have been seducing a girl of fifteen, that you have been behaving like a hardened Don Juan, that you have been corrupting the poor creature in the most dreadful way. That she deceived you with... what was it now?..."

"A clown, of course," exclaimed Winternitz, with a mad laugh.

"That a clown was the man she deceived you with, that on account of that creature you had adventures which grew more and more sinister, that you wanted to kill your mistress and yourself as well, and that finally you get fed up with the whole business and go travelling about the world, or even careering as far as Australia for all I care: yes, I can believe all that, but that you are the kind of man to cry out 'hei,' that, my dear Winternitz, is a rank swindle."

Winternitz defended himself. He swore that this ‘hei’ had come from his most inward being, or at any rate from a certain element in his most inward being. When Heinrich made further objections, he gradually became more and more reserved, and finally declared that some time or other he hoped to win his way to that inward freedom where he would be allowed to cry out “hei.”

“That time will never come,” replied Heinrich positively. “You may perhaps get some time to the epic or the dramatic ‘hei,’ but the lyrical or subjective ‘hei’ will remain, my dear Winternitz, a closed book to people like you and me for all eternity.”

Winternitz promised to alter the last poem, to make a point of continuing his development and to work at his inward purification.

He stood up, a proceeding which caused his starched shirt front to crack and a stud to break, held out his somewhat clammy hand to Heinrich and George, and went off to the literary men’s table at the back.

George expressed discreet appreciation of the poems which he had heard.

“I like him the best of the whole set, at any rate personally,” said Heinrich. “He at least has the good sense to maintain with me a certain mutual reserve in really intimate matters. Yes, you need not look at me again as though you were catching me in an attack of megalomania, but I can assure you, George, I have had nearly enough of the sort of people” (he swept the further table with a cursory glance) “who have always got an ‘ä soi’ on their lips.”

“What is always on their lips?”

Heinrich smiled. “You must know the story of the Polish Jew who was sitting in a railway compartment with an unknown man and behaved very conventionally — until he realised by some remark of the other’s that he was a Jew too, and on the strength of it immediately proceeded to stretch out his legs on the seat opposite with an ‘ä soi’ of relief.”

“Quite good,” said George.

“It is more than that,” explained Heinrich sternly, “it is deep; like so many other Jewish stories it gives a bird’s-eye view into the tragi-comedy of present-day Judaism. It expresses the eternal truth that no Jew has any real respect for his fellow Jew, never. As little as prisoners in a hostile country have any real respect for each other, particularly when they are hopeless. Envy, hate, yes frequently, admiration, even love; all that there can be between them, but never respect, for the play of all their emotional life takes place in an atmosphere of familiarity, so to speak, in which respect cannot help being stifled.”

“Do you know what I think?” remarked George. “That you are a more bitter Anti-Semite than most of the Christians I know.”

“Do you think so?” he laughed; “but not a real one. Only the man who is really angry at the bottom of his heart at the Jews’ good qualities and does everything he can to bring about the further development of their bad ones is a real Anti-Semite. But you are right up to a certain point, but I must finish by confessing that I am also an Anti-Aryan. Every race as such is naturally repulsive, only the individual manages at times to reconcile himself to the repulsive elements in his race by reason of his own personal qualities. But I will not deny that I am particularly sensitive to the faults of Jews. Probably the only reason is that I, like all others — we Jews, I mean — have been systematically educated up to this sensitiveness. We have been egged on from our youth to look upon Jewish peculiarities as particularly grotesque or repulsive, though we have not been so with regard to the equally grotesque and repulsive peculiarities of other people. I will not disguise it — if a Jew shows bad form in my presence, or behaves in a ridiculous manner, I have often so painful a sensation that I should like to sink into the earth. It is like a kind of shame that perhaps is akin to the shame of a brother who sees his sister undressing. Perhaps the whole thing is egoism too. One gets embittered at being always

made responsible for other people's faults, and always being made to pay the penalty for every crime, for every lapse from good taste, for every indiscretion for which every Jew is responsible throughout the whole world. That of course easily makes one unjust, but those are touches of nervousness and sensitiveness, nothing more. Then one pulls oneself together again. That cannot be called Anti-Semitism. But there are Jews whom I really hate, hate as Jews. Those are the people who act before others, and often before themselves, as though they did not belong to the rest at all. The men who try to offer themselves to their enemies and despisers in the most cowardly and cringing fashion, and think that in that way they can escape from the eternal curse whose burden is upon them, or from what they feel is equivalent to a curse. There are of course always Jews like that who go about with the consciousness of their extreme personal meanness, and consequently, consciously or unconsciously, would like to make their race responsible. Of course that does not help them the least bit. What has ever helped the Jews? the good ones and the bad ones. I mean, of course," he hastily added, "those who need something in the way of material or moral help." And then he broke off in a deliberately flippant tone: "Yes, my dear George, the situation is somewhat complicated and it is quite natural that every one who is not directly concerned with the question should not be able to understand it properly."

"No, you really should not...."

Heinrich interrupted him quickly. "Yes, I should, my dear George, that is just how it is. You don't understand us, you see. Many perhaps get an inkling, but understand? no. At any rate we understand you much better than you do us. Although you shake your head! Do we not deserve to? We have found it more necessary, you see, to learn to understand you than you did to learn to understand us. This gift of understanding was forced to develop itself in the course of time... according to the laws of the struggle for existence if you like. Just consider, if one is going to find one's way about in a foreign country, or, as I said before, in an enemy's country, to be ready for all the dangers and ambushes which lurk there, it is obvious that the primary essential is to get to know one's enemies as well as possible — both their good qualities and their bad."

"So you live among enemies? Among foreigners! You would not admit as much to Leo Golowski. I don't agree with him either, not a bit of it. But how strangely inconsistent you are when you — —"

Heinrich interrupted him, genuinely pained. "I have already told you the problem is far too complicated to be really solved. To find a subjective solution is almost impossible. A verbal solution even more so. Why, at times one might believe that things are not so bad. Sometimes one really is at home in spite of everything, feels one is as much at home here — yes, even more at home — than any of your so-called natives can ever feel. It is quite clear that the feeling of strangeness is to some extent cured by the consciousness of understanding. Why, it becomes, as it were, steeped in pride, condescension, tenderness; becomes dissolved — sometimes, of course, in sentimentalism, which is again a bad business."

He sat there with deep furrows in his forehead and looked in front of him.

"Does he really understand me better?" thought George, "than I do him, or is it simply another piece of megalomania...?"

Heinrich suddenly started as though emerging from a dream. He looked at his watch. "Half-past two! And my train goes at eight to-morrow."

"What, you are going away?"

"Yes, that is what I wanted to speak to you about so much. I shall have to say goodbye to you for a goodish time, I'm sorry to say. I am going to Prague. I am taking my father away, out of the asylum home to our own house."

“Is he better, then?”

“No, but he is in that stage when he is not dangerous to those near him.... Yes, that came quite quickly too.”

“And about when do you think you will be back?”

Heinrich shook his shoulders. “I can’t tell to-day, but however the thing develops, I certainly cannot leave my mother and sisters alone now.”

George felt a genuine regret at being deprived of Heinrich’s society in the near future. “It’s possible that you won’t find me in Vienna again when you come back. I shall probably go away this spring, you see.” And he almost felt a desire to take Heinrich into his confidence.

“I suppose you are travelling south?” asked Heinrich.

“Yes, I think so. To enjoy my freedom once again, just for a few months. Serious life begins next autumn, you see. I am looking out for a position in Germany at some theatre or other.”

“Really?”

The waiter came to the table. They paid and went.

They met Rapp and Gleissner together in the doorway. They exchanged a few words of greeting.

“And what have you been doing all this time, Herr Rapp?” asked George courteously.

Rapp took off his pince-nez. “Oh, my melancholy old job all the time. I am engaged in demonstrating the vanity of vanities.”

“You might make a change, Rapp,” said Heinrich. “Try your luck for once and praise the splendour of splendours.”

“What is the point?” said Rapp, and put on his glasses.

“That will prove itself in the course of time. But as a rule rotten work only keeps alive during its good fortune and its fame, and when the world at last realises the swindle, it has either been in the grave for a long time or has taken refuge in its presumable immortality.”

They were now in the street and all turned up their coat collars, since it had begun again to snow violently.

Gleissner, who had had his first great dramatic success a few weeks ago, quickly told them that the seventh performance of his work, which had taken place to-day, had also been sold out.

Rapp used that as a peg on which to hang malicious observations on the stupidity of the public. Gleissner answered with gibes at the impotence of the critic when confronted with true genius — and so they walked away through the snow with turned-up collar, quite enveloped in the steaming hate of their old friendship.

“That Rapp has no luck,” said Heinrich to George. “He’ll never forgive Gleissner for not disappointing him.”

“Do you consider him so jealous?”

“I wouldn’t go as far as that. Matters are rarely sufficiently simple to be disposed of in a single word. But just think what a fate it is to go about the world in the belief that you carry with you as deep a knowledge of it as Shakespeare had, and to feel at the same time that you aren’t able to express as much of it as, for instance, Herr Gleissner, although perhaps one is quite as much good as he is — or even more.”

They walked on together for a time in silence. The trees in the Ring were standing motionless with their white branches. It struck three from the tower of the Rathaus. They walked over the empty streets and took the way through the silent park. All around them the continuous fall of snow made everything shine almost brightly.

“By the way, I have not told you the latest news,” started Heinrich suddenly, looking in front of him and speaking in a dry tone.

“What is it?”

“That I have been receiving anonymous letters for some time.”

“Anonymous letters? What are the contents?”

“Oh, you can guess.”

“I see.” It was clear to George that it could only be something about the actress. Heinrich had returned in greater anguish than ever from the foreign town, where he had seen his mistress act the part of a depraved creature in a new play, with a truth and realism which he found positively intolerable. George knew that he and she had since then been exchanging letters full of tenderness and scorn, full of anger and forgiveness, full of broken anguish and laboured confidence.

“The delightful messages,” explained Heinrich, “have been coming along every morning for eight days. Not very pleasant, I can assure you.”

“Good gracious, what do they matter to you? You know yourself anonymous letters never contain the truth.”

“On the contrary, my dear George, they always do, but letters like that always contain a kind of higher truth, the great truth of possibilities. Men haven’t usually got sufficient imagination to create things out of nothing.”

“That is a charming way of looking at things. Where should we all get to, then? It makes things a bit too easy for libellers of all kinds.”

“Why do you say libellers? I regard it as highly improbable that there are any libels contained in the anonymous letters which I have been receiving. No doubt exaggerations, embellishments, inaccuracies....”

“Lies.”

“No, I am sure they are not lies; some, no doubt, but in a case like this how is one to separate the truth from the lies?”

“There is a very simple way of dealing with that. You go there.”

“Me go there?”

“Yes, of course that is what you ought to do. When you are on the spot you are bound to get at once to the real truth.”

“It would certainly be possible.”

They were walking under arcades on the wet stone. Their voices and steps echoed. George began again. “Instead of going on being demoralised with all this annoyance, I should try and convince myself personally as to how matters stood.”

“Yes, that would certainly be the soundest thing to do.”

“Well, why don’t you do it?”

Heinrich remained stationary and jerked out with clenched teeth: “Tell me, my dear George, have you not really noticed that I am a coward?”

“Nonsense, one doesn’t call that being a coward.”

“Call it whatever you like. Words never hit things off exactly. The more precisely they pretend to do so the less they really do. I know what I am. I would not go there for anything in the world. To make a fool of myself once more, no, no, no....”

“Well, what will you do?”

Heinrich shook his shoulders as though the matter really did not concern him.

Somewhat irritated, George went on questioning him. “If you will allow me to make a remark, what does the... lady chiefly concerned have to say?”

“The lady who is chiefly concerned, as you call her, with a wit, which though unconscious is positively infernal, does not know for the time being anything about my getting anonymous letters.”

“Have you left off corresponding with her?”

“What an idea! We write daily to each other as we did before. She the most tender and lying letters, I the meanest you can possibly imagine — disingenuous, reserved letters, that torture me to the quick.”

“Look here, Heinrich, you are really not a very noble character.”

Heinrich laughed out loud. “No, I am not noble. I clearly was not born to be that.”

“And when one thinks that after all these are sheer libels — —” George for his part had of course no doubt that the anonymous letters contained the truth. In spite of that he was honestly desirous that Heinrich should travel to the actual spot, convince himself, do something definite, box somebody’s ears or shoot somebody down. He imagined Felician in a similar position, or Stanzides or Willy Eissler. All of them would have taken it better or in a different way, one for which he certainly could have felt more sympathy. Suddenly the question ran through his brain as to what he would probably do, if Anna were to deceive him. Anna deceive him... was that really possible? He thought of her look that evening, that dark questioning look which she had sent over to Demeter Stanzides. No, that did not signify anything, he was sure of it, and the old episodes with Leo and the singing-master, they were harmless, almost childish. But he thought of something that was different and perhaps more significant — a strange question which she had put to him the other day when she had stayed unduly late in his company and had had to hurry off home with an excuse. Was he not afraid, she had asked him, to have it on his conscience that he was making her into a liar? It had rung half like a reproach and half like a warning, and if she herself was so little sure of herself could he trust her implicitly? Did he not love her? He... and did he not deceive her in spite of it, or was ready to do so at any moment, which, after all, came to the same thing?

Only an hour ago, in the fly, when he held her in his arms and kissed her, she had of course no idea that he had other thoughts than for her. And yet at a certain moment, with his lips on hers, he had longed for Sissy. Why should it not happen that Anna should deceive him? After all, it might have already happened... without his having an idea of it.... But all these ideas had as it were no substance, they swept through his mind, like fantastic almost amusing possibilities. He was standing with Heinrich in front of the closed door in the Floriani Gassi and shook hands with him.

“Well, God bless you,” he said; “when we see each other again I hope you will be cured of your doubts.”

“And would that be much good?” asked Heinrich. “Can one reassure oneself with certainties in matters of love? The most one can do is to reassure oneself with bad news, for that lasts, but being certain of something good is at the best an intoxication.... Well, goodbye, old chap. I hope we will see each other again in May. Then, whatever happens, I shall come here for a time, and we can talk again about our glorious opera.”

“Yes, if I shall be back again in Vienna in May. It may be that I shall not come back before the autumn.”

“And then go off again on your new career?”

“It is quite possible that it will turn out like that,” and he looked Heinrich in the face with a kind of childlike defiant smile that seemed to say: “I’m not going to tell you.”

Heinrich seemed surprised. “Look here, George, perhaps this is the very last time we are standing together in front of this door. Oh, I am far from thrusting myself into your confidence. This somewhat one-sided relationship will no doubt have to go on on its present lines. Well, it doesn’t matter.”

George looked straight in front of him.

“I hope things go all right,” said Heinrich as the door opened, “and drop me a line now and then.”

“Certainly,” answered George, and suddenly saw Heinrich’s eyes resting upon him with an expression of

real sympathy which he had never expected. “Certainly... and you must write to me, too. At any rate give me news of how things are at home and what you are working at. At all events,” he added sincerely, “we must continue to keep in touch with each other.”

The porter stood there with dishevelled hair and an angry sleepy expression, in a greenish-brown dressing-gown, with slippers on his bare feet.

Heinrich shook hands with George for the last time. “Goodbye, my dear friend,” he said, and then in a gentler voice, as he pointed to the porter: “I cannot keep him waiting any longer. You will find no particular difficulty in reading in his noble physiognomy, which is obviously the genuine native article, the names he is calling me to himself at this particular moment. Adieu.”

George could not help laughing. Heinrich disappeared. The door clanged and closed.

George did not feel the least bit sleepy and determined to go home on foot. He was in an excited exalted mood. He was envisaging the days which were now bound to come with a peculiar sense of tension. He thought of to-morrow’s meeting with Anna, the things they were going to talk over, the journey, the house that already stood somewhere in the world, which his imagination had already roughly pictured like a house out of a box of toys, light-green with a bright red roof and a black chimney. His own form appeared before him like a picture thrown on a white screen by a magic lantern: he saw himself sitting on a balcony in happy solitude, in front of a table strewn with music paper. Branches rocked in front of the railings. A clear sky hung above him, while below at his feet lay the sea, with a dreamy blueness that was quite abnormal.

V



GEORGE GENTLY OPENED the door of Anna's room. She still lay asleep in bed and breathed deeply and peacefully. He went out of the slightly darkened room, back again into his own and shut the door. Then he went to the open window and looked out. Clouds bathed in sunshine were sweeping over the water. The mountains opposite with their clearly-defined lines were floating in the brilliancy of the heavens, while the brightest blue was glittering over the gardens and houses of Lugano.

George was quite delighted to breathe in once more the air of this June morning, which brought to him the moist freshness of the lake and the perfume of the plane-trees, magnolias and roses in the hotel park; to look out upon this view, whose spring-like peace had welcomed him like a fresh happiness every morning for the last three weeks.

He drank his tea quickly, ran down the stairs as quickly and expectantly as he had once, when a boy, hurried off to his play, and took his accustomed way along the bank in the grey fragrance of the early shade. Here he would think of his own lonely morning walks at Palermo and Taormina in the previous spring, walks which he had frequently continued for hours on end, since Grace was very fond of lying in bed with open eyes until noon.

That period of his life, over which a recent though no doubt much-desired farewell seemed to squat like a sinister cloud, usually struck him as more or less bathed in melancholy. But this time all painful things seemed to lie in the far distance, and at any rate he had it in his power to put off the end as long as he wanted, if it did not come from fate itself.

He had left Vienna with Anna at the beginning of March, as it was no longer possible to conceal her condition. In January, in fact, George had decided to speak to her mother. He had more or less prepared himself for it, and was consequently able to make his communication quietly and in well-turned phraseology. The mother listened in silence and her eyes grew large and moist. Anna sat on the sofa with an embarrassed smile and looked at George as he spoke, with a kind of curiosity. They sketched out the plan for the ensuing months. George wanted to stay abroad with Anna until the early summer. Then a house was to be taken in the country in the neighbourhood of Vienna, so that her mother should not be far away in the time of greatest need, and the child could without difficulty be given out to nurse in the neighbourhood of the town. They also thought out an excuse for officious inquisitive people for Anna's departure and absence.

As her voice had made substantial progress of late — which was perfectly true — she had gone off to a celebrated singing mistress in Dresden, to complete her training.

Frau Rosner nodded several times, as though she agreed with everything, but the features of her face became sadder and sadder. It was not so much that she was oppressed by what she had just learnt, as she was by the realisation that she was bound to be so absolutely defenceless, poor middle-class mother that she was, sitting opposite the aristocratic seducer.

George, who noticed this with regret, endeavoured to assume a lighter and more sympathetic tone. He came closer to the good woman, he took her hand and held it for some seconds in his own. Anna had scarcely contributed a word to the whole discussion, but when George got ready to go she got up, and for the first time in front of her mother she offered him her lips to kiss, as though she were now celebrating her betrothal to him.

George went downstairs in better spirits, as though the worst were now really over. Henceforth he spent

whole hours at the Rosners' more frequently than before, practising music with Anna, whose voice had now grown noticeably in power and volume. The mother's demeanour to George became more friendly. Why, it often seemed to him as though she had to be on her guard against a growing sympathy for him, and there was one evening in the family circle when George stayed for supper, improvised afterwards to the company from the Meistersingers and Lohengrin with his cigar in his mouth, could not help enjoying the lively applause, particularly from Josef, and was almost shocked to notice as he went home that he had felt quite as comfortable, as though it had been a home he had recently won for himself.

When he was sitting over his black coffee with Felician a few days later the servant brought in a card, the receipt of which made a slight blush mount to his cheek. Felician pretended not to notice his brother's embarrassment, said good-bye and left the room. He met old Rosner in the doorway, inclined his head slightly in answer to his greeting and took no further notice.

George invited Herr Rosner, who came in in his winter coat with his hat and umbrella, to sit down, and offered him a cigar. Old Rosner said: "I have just been smoking," a remark which somehow or other reassured George, and sat down, while George remained leaning on the table.

Then the old man began with his accustomed slowness: "You will probably be able to imagine, Herr Baron, why I have taken the liberty of troubling you. I really wanted to speak to you in the earlier part of the day, but unfortunately I could not get away from the office."

"You would not have found me at home in the morning, Herr Rosner," answered George courteously.

"All the better then that I didn't have my journey for nothing. My wife has told me this morning... what has happened...." He looked at the floor.

"Yes," said George, and gnawed at his upper lip. "I myself intended.... But won't you take off your overcoat? It is very warm in the room."

"No thank you, thank you, it is not at all too warm for me. Well, I was horrified when my wife gave me this information. Indeed I was, Herr Baron.... I never would have thought it of Anna... never thought it possible... it is... really dreadful...." He spoke all the time in his usual monotonous voice, though he shook his head more often than usual.

George could not help looking all the time at his head with its thin yellow-grey hair, and felt nothing but a desolate boredom. "Really, Herr Rosner, the thing is not dreadful," he said at last. "If you knew how much I... and how sincere my affection for Anna is, you would certainly be very far from thinking the thing dreadful. At any rate, I suppose your wife has told you about our plans for the immediate future... or am I making a mistake...?"

"Not at all, Herr Baron, I have been informed of everything this morning. But I must say that I have noticed for some weeks that something was wrong in the house. It often struck me that my wife was very nervous and was often on the point of crying."

"On the point of crying! There is really no occasion for that, Herr Rosner. Anna herself, who is more concerned than any one else, is very well and is in her usual good spirits...."

"Yes, Anna at any rate takes it very well, and that, to speak frankly, is more or less my consolation. But I cannot describe to you, Baron, how hard hit... how, I could almost say... like a bolt from the blue... I could never, no, never have... have believed it...." He could not say any more. His voice trembled.

"I am really very concerned," said George, "that you should take the matter like this, in spite of the fact that your wife is bound to have explained everything to you, and that the measures we have taken for the near future presumably meet with your approval. I would prefer not to talk about a time which is further, though I hope not too far off, because phrases of all kinds are more or less distasteful to me, but you may be sure, Herr

Rosner, that I certainly shall not forget what I owe to a person like Anna.... Yes, what I owe to myself." He gulped.

In all his memory there was no moment in his life in which he had felt less sympathy for himself. And now, as is necessarily the case in all pointless conversations, they repeated themselves several times, until Herr Rosner finally apologised for having troubled him, and took his leave of George, who accompanied him to the stairs.

George felt an unpleasant aftermath in his soul for some days after this visit. The brother would be the finishing touch, he thought irritably, and he could not help imagining a scene of explanation in the course of which the young man would endeavour to play the avenger of the family honour, while George put him in his place with extraordinarily trenchant expressions.

George nevertheless felt a sense of relief after the conversation with Anna's parents had taken place, and the hours which he spent with his beloved alone in the peaceful room opposite the church were full of a peculiar feeling of comfort and safety. It sometimes seemed to them both as though time stood still.

It was all very well for George to bring guide-books, Burckhardt's *Cicerone*, and even maps to their meetings, and to plan out with Anna all kinds of routes; he did not as a matter of fact seriously think that all this would ever be realised.

So far, however, as the house in which the child was to be born was concerned, they were both impressed with the necessity of its being found and taken before they left Vienna. Anna once saw an advertisement in the paper which she was accustomed to read carefully for that very object, of a lodge near the forest, and not far from a railway station, which could be reached in one and a half hours from Vienna. One morning they both took the train to the place in question and they had a memory of a snow-covered lonely wooden building with antlers over the door, an old drunken keeper, a young blonde girl, a swift sleigh-ride over a snowy winter street, an extraordinarily jolly dinner in an enormous room in the inn, and then home in a badly-lighted over-heated compartment. This was the only time that George tried to find with Anna the house that must be standing somewhere in the world and waiting to be decided upon. Otherwise he usually went alone by train or tramway to look round the summer resorts which were near Vienna. Once, on a spring day that had come straight into the middle of the winter, George was walking through one of the small places situated quite near town, which he was particularly fond of, where village buildings, unassuming villas and elegant country houses lay close upon each other. He had completely forgotten, as often happened, why he had taken the journey, and was thinking with emotion of the fact that Beethoven and Schubert had taken the same walk as he, many years ago, when he unexpectedly ran up against Nürnberger. They greeted each other, praised the fine day, which had enticed them so far out into the open, and expressed regret that they so rarely saw each other since Bermann had left Vienna.

"Is it long since you heard anything of him?" asked George.

"I have only had a card from him," replied Nürnberger, "since he left. It is much more likely he would correspond regularly with you than with me."

"Why is it more likely?" inquired George, somewhat irritated by Nürnberger's tone, as indeed be frequently was.

"Well, at any rate you have the advantage over me of being a new acquaintance, and consequently offering more exciting subject-matter for his psychological interest than I can."

George detected in the accustomed flippancy of these words a certain sense of grievance which he more or less understood, for, as a matter of fact, Heinrich had bothered very little about Nürnberger of late, though he had previously seen a great deal of him, it being always his way to draw men to him and then drop them with

the greatest lack of consideration, according as their character did or did not fit in with his own mood.

"In spite of that I am not much better off than you," said George. "I haven't had any news of him for some weeks either. His father, too, appears to be in a bad way according to the last letter."

"So I suppose it will soon be all up with the poor old man now."

"Who knows? According to what Bermann writes me, he can still last for months."

Nürnberger shook his head seriously.

"Yes," said George lightly. "The doctors ought to be allowed in cases like that... to shorten the matter."

"You are perhaps right," answered Nürnberger, "but who knows whether our friend Heinrich, however much the sight of his father's incurable malady may put him off his work and perhaps many other things as well — who knows whether he might not all the same refuse the suggestion of finishing off this hopeless matter by a morphia injection?"

George felt again repulsed by Nürnberger's bitter, ironic tone, and yet when he remembered the hour when he had seen Heinrich more violently upset by a few obscure words in the letter of a mistress than by his father's madness, he could not drive out the impression that Nürnberger's opinion of their friend was correct. "Did you know old Bermann?" he asked.

"Not personally, but I still remember the time when his name was known in the papers, and I remember, too, many extremely sound and excellent speeches which he made in Parliament. But I am keeping you, my dear Baron. Goodbye. We will see each other no doubt one of these days in the café, or at Ehrenbergs'."

"You are not keeping me at all," replied George with deliberate courtesy. "I am quite at large, and I am availing myself of the opportunity of looking at houses for the summer."

"So you are going in the country, near Vienna this year?"

"Yes, for a time probably, and apart from that a family I know has asked me if I should chance to run across...." He grew a little red, as he always did when he was not adhering strictly to the truth. Nürnberger noticed it and said innocently: "I have just passed by some villas which are to let. Do you see, for instance, that white one with the white terrace?"

"It looks very nice. We might have a look at it, if you won't find it too dull coming with me. Then we can go back together to town."

The garden which they entered sloped upwards and was very long and narrow. It reminded Nürnberger of one in which he had played as a child. "Perhaps it is the same," he said. "We lived for years and years you know in the country in Grinzing or Heiligenstadt."

This "we" affected George in quite a strange way. He could scarcely realise Nürnberger's ever having been quite young, ever having lived as a son with his father and mother, as a brother with his sisters, and he felt all of a sudden that this man's whole life had something strange and hard about it.

At the top of the garden an open arbour gave a wonderfully fine view of the town, which they enjoyed for some time. They slowly went down, accompanied by the caretaker's wife, who carried a small child wrapped in a grey shawl in her arms. They then looked at the house — low musty rooms with cheap battered carpets on the floor, narrow wooden beds, dull or broken mirrors.

"Everything will be done up again in the spring," explained the caretaker, "then it will look very cheerful." The little child suddenly held out its tiny hand towards George, as if it wanted him to take it up in his arms. George was somewhat moved and smiled awkwardly.

As he rode with Nürnberger into the town on the platform of the tramway and chatted to him he felt that he had never got so close to him on all the many previous occasions when they had been together, as during this hour of clear winter sunshine in the country. When they said goodbye it was quite a matter of course that they

should arrange a new excursion on a day in the immediate future. And so it came about that George was several times accompanied by Nürnberger, when he continued his househunting in the neighbourhood of Vienna. On these occasions the fiction was still kept up that George was looking for a house for a family whom he knew, that Nürnberger believed it and that George believed that Nürnberger believed it.

On these excursions Nürnberger frequently came to speak of his youth, to speak about the parents whom he had lost very early, of a sister who had died young and of his elder brother, the only one of his relatives who was still alive. But he, an ageing bachelor like Edmund himself, did not live in Vienna, but in a small town in Lower Austria, where he was a teacher in a public school, where he had been transferred fifteen years ago as an assistant. He could easily have managed afterwards to have got an appointment again in the metropolis, but after a few years of bitterness, and even defiance, he had become so completely acclimatised to the quiet petty life of the place where he was staying that he came to regard a return to Vienna as more a sacrifice than anything else, and he now lived on, passionately devoted to his profession and particularly to his studies in philology, far from the world, lonely, contented, a kind of philosopher in the little town. When Nürnberger spoke of this distant brother George often felt as though he were hearing him speak about some one who had died, so absolutely out of the question seemed every possibility of a permanent reunion in the future. It was in quite a different tone, almost as though he were speaking of a being who could return once again, that he would talk with a perpetual wistfulness of the sister who had been dead several years. It was on a misty February day, while they were at the railway station waiting for the train to Vienna, and walking up and down with each other on the platform, that Nürnberger told George the story of this sister, who when a child of sixteen had become possessed as it were by a tremendous passion for the theatre, and had run away from home without saying goodbye in a fit of childish romanticism. She had wandered from town to town, from stage to stage, for ten years, playing smaller and smaller parts, since neither her talent nor her beauty appeared to be sufficient for the career which she had chosen, but always with the same enthusiasm, always with the same confidence in her future, in spite of the disillusions which she experienced and the sorrow which she saw. In the holidays she would come to the brothers, who were still living together, sometimes for weeks, sometimes only for days, and tell them about the provincial halls in which she had acted as though they were great theatres; about her few successes as though they were triumphs which she had won, about the wretched comedians at whose side she worked as though they were great artists, tell them about the petty intrigues that took place around her as though they were powerful tragedies of passion. And instead of gradually realising the miserable world in which she was living a life which was as much to be pitied as that of any one else, she spun every year the essence of her soul into more and more golden dreams. This went on for a long time, until at last she came home, feverish and ill. She lay in bed for months on end with flushed cheeks, raving in her delirium of a fame and happiness which she had never experienced, got up once again in apparent health, and went away once more, only to come back home, this time after a few weeks, in complete collapse with death written on her forehead. Her brother now travelled with her to the South; to Arco, Meran, to the Italian Lakes, and it was only as she lay stretched out in southern gardens beneath flowering trees, far away from the whirl that had dazed and intoxicated her throughout the years that she realised at last that her life had been simply a racketing about beneath a painted sky and between paper walls — that the whole essence of her existence had been an illusion. But even the little everyday incidents, the apartments and inns of the foreign town, seemed to her memory simply scenes which she had played in as an actress by the footlights, and not scenes which she had really lived, and as she approached nearer and nearer to the grave, there awoke within her an awful yearning for that real life which she had missed, and the more surely she knew that it was lost to her for ever, the clearer became the gaze with which she realised the fullness of the

world. And the strangest touch of all was the way in which, in the last weeks of her life, that talent to which she had sacrificed her whole existence without ever really possessing it manifested itself with diabolic uncanniness.

"It seems to me, even to-day," said Nürnberger, "that I have never heard verses so declaimed, never seen whole scenes so acted, even by the greatest actress, as I did by my sister in the hotel room at Cadenabbia, looking out on to the Lake of Como, a few days before she died. Of course," he added, "it is possible, even probable, that my memory is deceiving me."

"But why?" asked George, who was so pleased with this *finale* that he did not want to have it spoiled. And he endeavoured to convince Nürnberger, who listened to him with a smile, that he could not have made a mistake, and that the world had lost a great actress in that strange girl who lay buried in Cadenabbia.

George did not find on his excursions with Nürnberger the house in the country for which he was looking. In fact it seemed to become more difficult to find every time he went out. Nürnberger made occasional jokes about George's exacting requirements. He seemed to be looking for a villa which was to be faced in front by a well-kept road, while it was to have at the back a garden door which led into the natural forest. Eventually George himself did not seriously believe that he would now succeed in finding the desired house, and relied on the pressure of necessity after his return from his travels.

It seemed more essential to get as soon as possible into touch with a doctor, but George put this off too from one day to another. But one evening Anna informed him that she had been suddenly panic-stricken by a new attack of faintness, had visited Doctor Stauber and explained her condition to him. He had been very nice, had not expressed any astonishment, had thoroughly reassured her and only expressed the wish to speak to George before they went away.

A few days afterwards George went to see the doctor in accordance with his invitation.

The consultation hours were over. Doctor Stauber received him with the friendliness which he had anticipated, seemed to treat the whole matter as being as regular and as much a matter of course as it could possibly be, and spoke of Anna just as though she had been a young wife, a method of procedure which affected George in a strange but not unpleasant way.

When the practical discussion was over the doctor inquired about the destination of their journey. George had not yet mapped out any programme, only this much was decided, that the spring was to be spent in the south, probably in Italy. Doctor Stauber took the opportunity to talk about his last stay in Rome, which was ten years back. He had been in personal touch on this occasion, as he had been once before, with the director of the excavations and spoke to George in almost ecstatic terms of the latest discoveries on the Palatine, about which he had written monographs as a young man, which he had published in the antiquarian journals. He then showed George, and not without pride, his library, which was divided into two sections, medicine and the history of art, and took out and offered to lend him a few rare books, one printed in the year 1834 on the Vatican collections and also a history of Sicily. George felt highly excited as he realised with such vividness the rich days that lay in front of him. He was overcome by a kind of homesickness for places which he knew well and had missed for a long time. Half-forgotten pictures floated up in his memory, the pyramids of Cestius stood on the horizon in sharp outlines, as they had appeared to him when he had ridden back as a boy into the town at evening with the prince of Macedon; the dim church, where he had seen his first mistress step up to the altar as a bride, opened its doors; a bark under a dark sky with strange sulphur yellow sails drew near to the coast.... He began to speak about the several towns and landscapes of the south which he had seen as a boy and as a youth, explained the longing for those places which often seized on him like a genuine homesickness, his joy at being able to take in with mature appreciation all the differing things which he had

longed for, reserved for himself and then forgotten, and many new things besides, and this time too in the society of a being who was able to appreciate and enjoy everything with him, and whom he held dear.

Doctor Stauber, who was in the act of putting a book back on the shelf, turned round suddenly to George, looked gently at him and said: "I am very glad of that." As George answered his look with some surprise he added: "It was the first tender allusion to your relationship to Annerl that I have noticed in the course of the last hour. I know, I know that you are not the kind of man to take a comparative stranger into your confidence, but if only because I had no reason to expect it, it has really done me good. It came straight from your heart, one could see it; and I should have been really sorry for Annerl — excuse me, I always call her that — if I had been driven to think that you are not as fond of her as she deserves."

"I really don't know," replied George coolly, "what gave you cause to doubt it, doctor."

"Did I say anything about doubts?" replied Stauber good-humouredly. "But, after all, it has happened before that a young man who has had all kinds of experiences does not appreciate a sacrifice of this kind sufficiently, for it still is a sacrifice, my dear Baron. We can be as superior to all prejudices as much as we like — but it is not a trifle even to-day for a young girl of good family to make up her mind to do a thing like that, and I won't conceal it from you — of course I did not let Annerl notice anything — it gave even me a slight shock when she came to me the other day and told me all about it."

"Excuse me, Herr Doctor," replied George, irritated but yet polite, "if it gave you a shock that is surely some proof against your being superior to prejudices...."

"You are right," said Stauber with a smile, "but perhaps you will overlook this lapse when you consider that I am somewhat older than you and belong to another age. Even a more or less independent man... which I flatter myself I am... cannot quite escape from the influence of his age. It is a strange thing, but believe me, even among the young people, who have grown up on Nietzsche and Ibsen, there are quite as many Philistines as there were thirty years ago. They won't own up to it, but it does go against the grain with them, for instance, if some one goes and seduces their sister, or if one of their worthy wives suddenly takes it into her head that she wants to live her own life.... Many, of course, are consistent and carry their pose through... but that is more a matter of self-control than of their real views, and in the old days, you know, the age to which I belong, when ideas were so immovably hide-bound, when every one for instance was quite sure of things like this: one has to honour one's parents or else one is a knave... or... one only loves really once in one's life... or it's a pleasure to die for one's fatherland... in that time, mind you, when every decent man held up some flag or other, or at any rate had something written on his banner... believe me, the so-called modern ideas had more adherents than you suspect. The only thing was that those adherents did not quite know it themselves, they did not trust their own ideas, they thought themselves, as it were, debauchees or even criminals. Shall I tell you something, Herr Baron? There are really no new ideas at all. People feel with a new intensity — that's what it is. But do you seriously think that Nietzsche discovered the superman, Ibsen the fraud of life and Anzengruber the truth that the parents who desire love and honour from their children ought to 'come up to the scratch' themselves? Not a bit of it. All the ethical ideas have always been there, and one would really be surprised if one knew what absolute blockheads have thought of the so-called great new truths, and have even frequently given them expression long before the geniuses to whom we owe these truths, or rather the courage to regard these truths as true. If I have gone rather too far forgive me. I really only wanted to say... and you will believe me, I am sure.... I know as well as you, Baron, that there is many a virgin girl who is a thousand times more corrupt than a so-called fallen woman; and that there is many a young man who passes for respectable who has worse things on his conscience than starting a *liaison* with an innocent girl. And yet... it is just the curse of my period..." he interpolated with a smile, "I could not help it,

the first moment Annerl told me her story certain unpleasant words which in their day had their own fixed meaning began to echo through my old head in their old tones, silly out-of-date words like... libertine... seduction... leaving in the lurch... and so on, and that is why I must ask you once more to forgive me, now that I have got to know you somewhat more intimately... that is why I felt that shock which a modern man would certainly not own that he experienced. But to talk seriously once again, just consider a minute how your poor father, who did not know Anna, would have taken the matter. He was certainly one of the shrewdest and most unprejudiced men whom one can imagine... and all the same you have not the slightest doubt that the matter would not have passed off without his feeling something of a shock as well."

George could not help holding out his hand to the doctor. The unexpectedness of this sudden allusion caused so intense a longing to spring up within him that the only thing he could do to assuage it was to begin to talk of him who had passed away. The doctor was able to tell him of many meetings with the late baron, mostly chance casual encounters in the street, at the sessions of the scientific academy, at concerts. There came another of those moments in which George thought himself strangely guilty in his attitude towards the dead man and registered a mental vow to become worthy of his memory.

"Remember me kindly to Annerl," said the doctor as he said goodbye, "but I would rather you did not tell her anything about the shock. She is a very sensitive creature, that you know well enough, and now it is particularly important to save her any excitement. Remember, my dear Baron, there is only one question before us now — to see that a healthy child comes into the world, everything else.... Well, give her my best regards. I hope we shall all see each other again in the summer in the best of health."

George went away with a heightened consciousness of his responsibilities towards the being who had given herself to him and to that other who would wake up to existence in a few months. He thought first of making a will and leaving it behind with a lawyer. But on further consideration he thought it more proper to confide in his brother, who after all stood nearer to him in sentiment than any one else. But with that peculiar embarrassment which was characteristic of the really intimate relationship between the brothers he let day after day go by, until at last Felician's departure on the hunting expedition in Africa was quite imminent.

The night before, on the way home from the club, George informed his brother that he was thinking of taking a long journey in the near future.

"Really! For how long shall you be away?" asked Felician.

George caught the note of a certain anxiety in these words and felt that it was incumbent on him to add: "It will probably be the last long journey I shall take for some years. I hope to find myself in a permanent position in the autumn."

"So you have quite made up your mind?"

"Yes, of course."

"I am very glad, George, for different reasons, as you can imagine, that you want at last to do something serious. And besides, it's a very sound thing, that it is not a case of one of us going out into the world while the other remains at home alone. That would really have been rather sad."

George knew quite well that Felician would get a foreign diplomatic post in the following autumn, but he had never realised so clearly that in a few months that brotherly life which had lasted for so many years, that common life in the old house opposite the park, yes, his whole youth so to speak, would be irrevocably over and done with. He saw life lying in front of him, serious, almost menacing. "Have you any idea," he asked, "where they will send you?"

"There is some chance of Athens."

"Would you like that?"

“Why not? The society ought to be fairly interesting. Bernburg was there for three years and was sorry to leave. And they have transferred him to London, too, and that’s certainly not to be sniffed at.”

They walked in silence for a while and took their usual way through the park. An atmosphere suggesting the approaching spring was around them, although small white flakes of snow still gleamed on the lawns.

“So you are going to Italy?” asked Felician.

“Yes.”

“As far down South as last spring?”

“I don’t know yet.”

Again a short silence. Suddenly Felician’s voice came out of the darkness. “Have you heard anything of Grace since then?”

“Of Grace?” repeated George, somewhat surprised, for it had been a long time since Felician had mentioned that name. “I have heard nothing more of Grace. Besides, that is what we arranged. We took farewell of each other for ever at Genoa. That is already more than a year ago....”

A gentleman was sitting on a seat quite in the darkness in a fur coat with a top hat and white gloves. “Ah, Labinski,” thought George for a whole minute; the next minute he of course remembered that he had shot himself. This was not the first time that he had thought he had seen him. A man had sat in broad daylight in the botanical garden at Palermo under a Japanese ash-tree whom George had taken for a whole second for Labinski; and recently George had thought he had recognised the face of his dead father behind the shut windows of a fiacre.

The houses gleamed behind the leafless branches. One of them was the house in which the brothers lived. The time has come, thought George, for me to mention the matter at last. And to bring matters to a head, he observed lightly: “Besides, I am not going to Italy alone this year.”

“Hm! Hm!” said Felician, and looked in front of him.

George felt at the same moment that he had not taken the right tone. He was apprehensive of Felician’s thinking something like this: “Oh yes, he has got an adventure again with some shady person or other.” And he added seriously: “I say, Felician, I have something serious I should like to talk to you about.”

“What! Serious!”

“Yes.”

“Well, George,” said Felician gently, and looked at him sideways, “what is up, then? You are not thinking of marrying by any chance?”

“Oh no,” replied George, and then felt irritated that he had repudiated that possibility with such definiteness. “No, it is not a question of marriage, but of something much more vital.”

Felician remained standing for a moment. “You have a child?” he asked seriously.

“No, not yet. That’s just it, that is why we are leaving.”

“Indeed,” said Felician.

They had got out of the park. Involuntarily both looked up to the window of their house, from which only a year ago their father had so often nodded his welcome to them both. Both felt with sorrow that somehow since their father’s death they had gradually slipped away from each other — and felt at the same time a slight fear of how much further from each other life could still take them.

“Come into my room,” said George when they got upstairs. “That’s the most comfortable place.”

He sat down on his comfortable chair by his secretary. Felician lounged in the corner on a little green leather ottoman which was near the writing-table and listened quietly.

George told him the name of his mistress, spoke of her with heartfelt sympathy, and asked Felician, in case

anything should happen to him, George, in the near future to undertake to look after the mother and her child. He left so much of his fortune as was still available to the child, of course. The mother was to have the usufruct until the child became of age.

When George had finished Felician said with a smile after a short silence: “Oh well, you’ve got every reason to hope that you will come back as whole and sound from your journey as I will from Africa, and so our conversation has probably only an academic significance.”

“I hope so too, of course. But at any rate it reassures me, Felician, that you know all about my secret, and that I can be free from anxiety in every way.”

“Yes, of course you can.” He shook hands with his brother. Then he got up and walked up and down the room. Finally he said: “You have no thought of legitimising your relationship?”

“Not for the time being. One can never tell what the future may bring forth.”

Felician remained standing. “Well....”

“Are you in favour of my marrying?” exclaimed George with some astonishment.

“Not at all.”

“Felician, be frank, please.”

“Look here, one should not advise any one in affairs like that. Not even one’s own brother.”

“But if I ask you, Felician? It seems to me as though there is something in the business you didn’t quite like.”

“Well, it is like this, George.... You won’t misunderstand me.... I know of course that you are not thinking of leaving her in the lurch. On the contrary, I am convinced that you will behave all through far more nobly than any ordinary man in your position. But the question is really this, would you have let yourself go into the thing if you had considered the consequences from every point of view?”

“That of course is very hard to answer,” said George.

“I mean just this: Did you intend... not to make her your companion for life, but to have a child by her all the same?”

“Great heavens, who thinks of that? Of course if one had wanted to be so absolutely on the safe side — —”

Felician interrupted him. “Does she know that you are not thinking of marrying her?”

“Why, you don’t think, surely, I promised her marriage?”

“No. But you did not promise to leave her stranded either.”

“It would have been equally mean if I had promised, Felician. The whole thing came about as affairs like that always do, developed without any definite plan right up to the present time.”

“Yes, that is all right. The only question is whether one is not more or less under an obligation to have definite plans in really vital matters.”

“Possibly.... But that was never my line, unfortunately.”

Felician remained standing in front of George, looked at him affectionately and nodded a few times.

“That is quite true, George. You are not angry with me.... But now that we are talking about it.... Of course I am not suggesting I have any right to lecture you on your mode of life....”

“Go ahead, Felician.... I mean if.... It really does me good.” He stroked him lightly on the hand which lay on the back of the ottoman.

“Well, there is not much more to be said. I only mean that in everything you do there is just... the same lack of system. Look here, to talk of another important matter, I personally am quite convinced of your talent and many others are, too. But you really work damned little, don’t you? And fame doesn’t come of itself,

even when one....”

“Quite so. But I don’t work as little as you think, Felician, it is only that work is such a peculiar business with people of my temperament. Frequently when one is out for a walk or even asleep one gets all kinds of ideas.... And then in the autumn....”

“Yes, yes, we hope so, though I am afraid that you won’t be able to live on your salary at the commencement, and it is very questionable how long your little money will hold out with your mode of life. I tell you candidly, when you mentioned a few moments ago the sum which you were able to leave to your child I had quite a shock.”

“Be patient, Felician. In three or five years, when I have my opera finished....” He spoke in an ironical tone.

“Are you really writing an opera, George?”

“I am beginning one shortly.”

“Who is doing the libretto for you?”

“Heinrich Bermann. Of course you scowl again.”

“My dear George, I have always been very far from lecturing you in any way about the people you associate with. It is quite natural that you with your intellectual tastes should live in a different set and mix with different people to those I do, people whom I should probably find rather less to my taste. But so long as Herr Bermann’s libretto is good you have my blessing... and Herr Bermann, of course, too.”

“The libretto is not ready yet, only the scenario.”

Felician could not help laughing. “So that’s how your opera stands! I only hope the theatre is already built at which you are going to get a post as conductor.”

“Come, come,” said George, somewhat hurt.

“Forgive me,” replied Felician, “I have not really any doubts about your future. I should only like you yourself to do a bit more towards it. I really should be so... proud, George, if you were to do anything great, and it, I’m sure, only depends on yourself. Willy Eissler, who is a man of genuine musical gifts, told me again only the other day that he thinks more of you than of most of the young composers.”

“On the strength of the few songs of mine which he knows? You’re a good fellow, Felician, but there is really no need for you to encourage me. I already know what I have got in me, only I must be more industrious, and my going away will do me quite a lot of good. It does one good to get out of one’s usual surroundings for a time, like this. And this time it is quite different from last. It is the first time, Felician, that I have had anything to do with a person who is absolutely my equal, who is more... whom I can treat as a true friend as well, and the consciousness that I am going to have a child, and by her, too, is, in spite of all the accompanying circumstances, rather pleasant.”

“I can quite understand that,” said Felician, and contemplated George seriously and affectionately.

The clock on the writing-table struck two.

“What, so late already,” cried Felician, “and I have got to pack early to-morrow. Well, we can talk over everything at breakfast to-morrow. Well, good-night, George.”

“Good-night, Felician. Thank you,” he added with emotion.

“What are you thanking me for, George? You really are funny!” They shook hands and then kissed each other, which they had not done for quite a long time, and George resolved to call his child Felician if it was to be a boy, and he rejoiced at the good omen of a name which had so happy a ring.

After his brother’s departure George felt as deserted as though he had never had another friend. Living in the great lonely house, where he seemed to be weighed down by a mood like that which had followed the first

weeks after his father's death, made him feel depressed.

He regarded the days which still had to elapse before the departure as a transition period, in which it was not worth while starting anything. The hours he spent with his mistress in the room opposite the church became colourless and blank. A psychological change, too, seemed to be now taking place in Anna herself. She was frequently irritable, then taciturn again, almost melancholy, and George was often overcome by so great a sense of *ennui* when he was with her that he felt quite nervous of the next month in which they would be thrown completely into each other's society. Of course the journey in itself promised change enough, but how would it be in the subsequent months which would have to be spent somewhere in the neighbourhood of Vienna? He must also think about a companion for Anna; but he was still putting off speaking to her about it, when Anna herself came to him with a piece of news which was calculated to remove that difficulty, and at the same time to raise another one, in the simplest way conceivable. Anna had recently, particularly since she had gradually given up her lessons, become more and more intimate with Therese, and had confided everything to her, and so it soon came about that Therese's mother was also in the secret. This lady was much more congenial to Anna than her own mother, who after a slight glimmer of understanding had held aloof, aggrieved and depressed, from her erring daughter.

Frau Golowski not only declared herself ready to live with Anna in the country, but even promised to discover the little house which George had not been able to find, while the young couple were away. However much this willingness suited George's convenience, he found it none the less somewhat painful to be under an obligation to this old woman, who was a stranger to him, and in moments when he was out of temper it struck him as almost grotesque that it should be Leo's mother and Berthold's father, of all people, who should be fated to play so important a part in so momentous an event in Anna's life.

George paid his farewell visit at Ehrenbergs' on a fine May afternoon three days before he went away.

He had only rarely shown himself there since that Christmas celebration and his conversations with Else had remained on the most innocent of footings. She confessed to him, as though to a friend who could not now misunderstand remarks of that character, that she felt more and more unsettled at home. In particular the atmosphere of the house, as George had frequently noticed before, seemed to be permanently overcast by the bad relations between father and son. When Oskar came in at the door with his nonchalant aristocratic swagger and began to talk in his Viennese aristocratic accent, his father would turn scornfully away, or would be unable to suppress allusions to the fact that he could make an end this very day of all that aristocracy by stopping or lowering his so-called allowance, which as a matter of fact was neither more nor less than pocket-money. If, on his side, his father began to talk Yiddish, as he was most fond of doing in front of company, and with obvious malice, Oskar would bite his lips and make a point of leaving the room. So it was only very rarely during the last few months that father and son stayed in Vienna or in Neuhaus at the same time. They both found each other's presence almost intolerable.

When George came in to Ehrenbergs' the room was almost in darkness. The marble Isis gleamed from behind the pianoforte, and the twilight of the late afternoon was falling in the alcove where mother and daughter sat opposite each other. For the first time the appearance of these two women struck George as somewhat strangely pathetic. A vague feeling floated up in his mind that perhaps this was the last time he would see this picture, and Else's smile shone towards him with such sweet melancholy, that he thought for a whole minute: might I not have found my happiness here, after all?

He now sat next to Frau Ehrenberg (who was going on quietly knitting) opposite Else, smoked a cigarette and felt quite at home. He explained that, fascinated by the tempting spring weather, he was starting on his projected journey earlier than he had intended, and that he would probably prolong it until the summer.

“And we are going to Auhof as early as the middle of May this time,” said Frau Ehrenberg, “and we certainly count upon seeing you down there this year.”

“If you are not elsewhere engaged,” added Else with a perfectly straight face.

George promised to come in August, at any rate for some days. The conversation then turned on Felician and Willy, who had started with their party a few days ago from Biskra on their hunting expedition in the desert; on Demeter Stanzides, who announced his immediate intention of resigning from the army and retiring to an estate in Hungary; and finally on Heinrich Bermann of whom no one had had any news for some weeks.

“Who knows if he will ever come back to Vienna at all?” said Else.

“Why shouldn’t he? What makes you think that, Fräulein Else?”

“Upon my word, perhaps he’ll marry that actress and trot about the world with her.”

George shrugged his shoulders... he didn’t know personally of any actress with whom Heinrich was mixed up, and he ventured to express a doubt whether Heinrich would ever marry any one, whether she was a Princess or a circus rider.

“It would be rather a pity if Bermann were to,” said Frau Ehrenberg, without taking any notice of George’s discretion. “I certainly think that young people take these matters either too lightly or too seriously.”

Else followed up the idea: “Yes, it is strange, all you men are either cleverer or much sillier in these matters than in any other, although really it is just in such crucial moments of one’s life, that one ought as far as possible to be one’s ordinary self.”

“My dear Else,” said George casually, “once one’s passions are set going — —”

“Yes, when they are set going,” emphasised Frau Ehrenberg.

“Passions!” exclaimed Else. “I believe that like all other great things in the world, they are really something quite rare.”

“What do you know, my child?” said Frau Ehrenberg.

“At any rate I’ve never so far seen anything of that kind in my immediate environment,” explained Else.

“Who knows if you would discover it,” remarked George, “even though it did come once in a way quite near you? Viewed from outside a flirtation and a life’s tragedy may sometimes look quite the same.”

“That is certainly not true,” said Else. “Passion is something that is bound to betray itself.”

“How do you manage to know that, Else?” objected Frau Ehrenberg. “Passions can often conceal themselves deeper than any ordinary trumpery little emotion, for the very reason that there is usually more at stake.”

“I think,” replied George, “that it is a very personal matter. There are, of course, people who have everything written on their forehead, and others who are impenetrable; being impenetrable is quite as much a talent as anything else.”

“It can be trained too, like anything else,” said Else.

The conversation stuck for a moment, as is apt to occur when the personal application that lies behind some general observation flashes out only too palpably.

Frau Ehrenberg started a new topic. “Have you been composing anything nice, George?” she asked.

“A few trifles for the piano. My quintette will soon be ready too.”

“The quintette is beginning to grow mythical,” said Else discontentedly.

“Else!” said her mother.

“Well, it really would be a good thing, if he were to be more industrious.”

“You are perhaps right about that,” replied George.

“I think artists used to work much more in former days than they do now.”

"The great ones," qualified George.

"No, all," persisted Else.

"Perhaps it is a good thing that you are going to travel," said Frau Ehrenberg, "for apparently you've too many distractions here."

"He'll let himself be distracted anywhere," asserted Else sternly. "Even in Iglau, or wherever else he happens to be next year."

"That's why I've never yet thought of your going away," said Frau Ehrenberg and shook her head; "and your brother will be in Sophia or Athens next year and Stanzides in Hungary... it's really a great pity to think of all the nicest men being scattered like this to the four corners of the world."

"If I were a man," said Else, "I would scatter too."

George smiled. "You're dreaming of a journey round the world in a white yacht, Madeira, Ceylon, San Francisco."

"Oh no, I shouldn't like to be without a profession, but I should probably have been an officer in the merchant service."

"Won't you be kind enough" — Frau Ehrenberg turned to George— "to play us one or two of your new things?"

"Delighted, I'm sure." He got up from the recess and walked towards the window into the darkness of the room. Else got up and turned on the light on top. George opened the piano, sat down and played his ballads.

Else had sat down in an arm-chair and as she sat there, with her arm resting on the side of the chair and her head resting on her arm in the pose of a *grande dame* and with the melancholy expression of a precocious child, George felt again strangely thrilled by her look. He was not feeling very satisfied with his ballad to-day, and was fully conscious that he was endeavouring to help out its effect by putting too much expression into his playing.

Hofrat Wilt stepped softly into the room and made a sign that they were not to disturb themselves. He then remained standing by the door leaning against the wall, tall, superior, good-natured, with his closely-cropped grey hair, until George ended his performance with some emphatic harmonies. They greeted each other. Wilt congratulated George on being a free man and being now able to travel South. "I'm sorry to say I can't do it," he added, "and all the same one has at times a vague notion that even though one were not to visit one's office for a year on end, not the slightest change would take place in Austria." He talked with his usual irony about his profession and his Fatherland. Frau Ehrenberg retorted that there was not a man who was more patriotic, and took his calling more seriously than he himself. He agreed. But he regarded Austria as an infinitely complicated instrument, which only a master could handle properly, and said that the only reason for its sounding badly so often was that every muddler tried his art upon it. "They'll go on knocking it about," he said dismally, "until all the strings break and the frame too."

When George went Else accompanied him into the empty room. She still had a few words to say to him about his ballads. She had particularly liked the middle movement. It had had such an inner glow. Anyway, she hoped he would have a good time on his journey.

He thanked her.

"So," she said suddenly, when he already had his hat in his hand, "it's really a case now of saying a final farewell to certain dreams."

"What dreams?" he asked in surprise.

"Mine of course, which you are bound to have known about by this time."

George was very astonished. She had never been so specific. He smiled awkwardly and sought for an

answer. “Who knows what the future will bring forth?” he said at last lightly.

She puckered her forehead. “Why aren’t you at any rate as straight with me as I am with you? I know quite well that you are not travelling alone... I also know who is going with you... what is more I know the whole thing. Good gracious, what haven’t I known since we have known each other?”

And George heard grief and rage quivering below the surface of her words. And he knew that if he ever did make her his wife, she would make him feel that she had had to wait for him too long. He looked in front of him and maintained a silence that seemed at once guilty and defiant.

Then Else smiled brightly, held out her hand and said once again: “*Bon voyage*.”

He pressed her hand as though he were bound to make some apology. She took it away from him, turned round and went back into the room. He still waited for a few seconds standing by the door and then hurried into the street. On the same evening George saw Leo Golowski again in the café, for the first time for many weeks. He knew from Anna that Leo had recently had to put up with a great deal of unpleasantness as a volunteer and that that “fiend in human form” in particular had persecuted him with malice, with real hatred in fact. It occurred to George to-day that Leo had greatly altered during the short time in which he had not seen him. He looked distinctly older.

“I’m very glad to get a chance of seeing you again before I leave,” said George and sat down opposite him at the café table.

“You are glad,” replied Leo, “that you happened to run across me again, while I positively needed to see you once again, that is the difference.” His voice had even a tenderer note than usual. He looked George in the face with a kind, almost fatherly expression.

At this moment George no longer had any doubt that Leo knew everything. He felt as embarrassed for a few seconds as though he were responsible to him, was irritated at his own embarrassment and was grateful to Leo for not appearing to notice it. This evening they talked about practically nothing except music. Leo inquired after the progress of George’s work, and it came about during the course of the conversation that George declared himself quite willing to play one of his newest compositions to Leo on the following Sunday afternoon. But when they took leave of each other, George suddenly had the unpleasant feeling of having passed with comparative success a theoretical examination, and of being faced to-morrow with a practical examination. What did this young man, who was so mature for his years, really want of him? Was George to prove to him that his talent entitled him to be Anna’s lover or her child’s father? He waited for Leo’s visit with genuine repugnance. He thought for a minute of refusing to see him. But when Leo appeared with all that innocent sincerity which he so frequently liked to affect, George’s mood soon became less harsh. They drank tea and smoked cigarettes and George showed him his library, the pictures which were hanging in the house, the antiquities and the weapons, and the examination feeling vanished. George sat down at the pianoforte, played a few of his earlier pieces and also his latest ones as well as the ballads, which he rendered much better than he had done yesterday at Ehrenbergs’, and then some songs, while Leo followed the melody with his fingers, but with sure musical feeling. Eventually he started to play the quintette from the score. He did not succeed and Leo stationed himself at the window with the music and read it attentively.

“One can’t really tell at all so far,” he said. “A great deal of it indicates a dilettante with a lot of taste, other parts an artist without proper discipline. It’s rather in the songs that one feels... but feels what?... talent... I don’t know. One feels at any rate that you have distinction, real musical distinction.”

“Well, that’s not so much.”

“As a matter of fact it’s pretty little, but it doesn’t prove anything against you either, since you have worked so little — worked very little and felt little.”

“You think...” George forced a sarcastic laugh.

“Oh, you’ve probably lived a great deal but felt... you know what I mean, George?”

“Yes, I can imagine well enough, but you’re really making a mistake; why I rather think that I have a certain tendency to sentimentalism, which I ought to combat.”

“Yes, that’s just it. Sentimentalism, you know, is something which is the direct antithesis to feeling, something by means of which one reassures oneself about one’s lack of feeling, one’s essential coldness. Sentimentalism is feeling which one has obtained, so to speak, below cost price. I hate sentimentalism.”

“Hm, and yet I think that you yourself are not quite free from it.”

“I am a Jew, it’s a national disease with us. Our respectable members are working to change it into rage or fury. It’s a bad habit with the Germans, a kind of emotional slovenliness so to speak.”

“So there is an excuse for you, not for us.”

“There is no excuse for diseases either if, fully realising what one is doing, one has missed one’s opportunity of protecting oneself against them. But we are beginning to babble in aphorism and are consequently only on the way to half or quarter truths. Let’s go back to your quintette. I like the theme of the adagio best.”

George nodded. “I heard it once in Palermo.”

“What,” said Leo, “is it supposed to be a Sicilian melody?”

“No, it rippled to me out of the waves of the sea when I went for a walk one morning along the shore. Being alone is particularly good for my work, so is change of scene. That’s why I promise myself all kinds of things from my trip.” He told him about Heinrich Bermann’s opera plot, which he found very stimulating. When Heinrich came back again, Leo was to make him seriously start on the libretto.

“Don’t you know yet,” said Leo, “his father is dead?”

“Really? When? How do you know?”

“It was in the paper this morning.”

They spoke about Heinrich’s relationship to the dead man and Leo declared that the world would perhaps get on better if parents would more frequently learn by the experiences of their children instead of asking their children to adapt themselves to their own hoary wisdom. The conversation then turned on the relations between fathers and sons, on true and false kinds of gratefulness, on the dying of people one held dear, on the difference between mourning and grief, on the dangers of memory and the duty of forgetting. George felt that Leo was a very serious thinker, was very solitary and knew how to be so. He felt almost fond of him when the door closed behind him in the late twilight hour and the thought that this man had been Anna’s first infatuation did him good.

The remaining days passed more quickly than he anticipated, what with purchases, arrangements and all kinds of preparations. And one evening George and Anna drove after each other to the station in two separate vehicles and jestingly greeted each other in the vestibule with great politeness, as though they had been distant acquaintances who had met by accident.

“My dear Fräulein Rosner, what a fortunate coincidence! are you also going to Munich by any chance?”

“Yes, Herr Baron.”

“Hullo, that’s excellent! and have you a sleeping-car, my dear Fräulein?”

“Oh yes, Herr Baron, berth number five.”

“How strange now, I have number six.”

They then walked up and down on the platform. George was in a very good temper, and he was glad that in her English dress, narrow-brimmed travelling hat and blue veil Anna looked like an interesting foreigner.

They went the length of the entire train until they came to the engine, which stood outside the station and was sending violent puffs of light-grey steam up to the dark sky. Outside green and red lamps glowed on the track with a faint light. Nervous whistles came from somewhere out of the distance and a train slowly struggled out of the darkness into the station. A red light waved magically to and fro over the ground, seemed to be miles away, stopped and was suddenly quite near. And outside, shining and losing themselves in the invisible, the lines went their way to near and far, into night and morning, into the morrow, into the inscrutable.

Anna climbed into the compartment. George remained standing outside for a while and derived amusement from watching the other travellers, those who were in an excited rush, those who preserved a dignified calm, and those who posed as being calm — and all the various types of people who were seeing their friends off: the depressed, the jolly, the indifferent.

Anna was leaning out of the window. George chatted with her, behaved as though he had not the slightest idea of leaving and then jumped in at the last minute. The train went away. People were standing on the platform, incomprehensible people who were remaining behind in Vienna, and who on their side seemed to find all the others who were now really leaving Vienna equally incomprehensible. A few pocket-handkerchiefs fluttered. The station-master stood there impressively and gazed sternly after the train. A porter in a blue-and-white striped linen blouse held a yellow bag high up and looked inquisitively into every window. Strange, thought George casually, there are people who are going away and yet leave their yellow bags behind in Vienna. Everything vanished, handkerchiefs, bags, station-master, station. The brightly-lighted signal-box, the Gloriette, the twinkling lights of the town, the little bare gardens along the embankment; and the train whizzed on through the night. George turned away from the window. Anna sat in the corner. She had taken off her hat and veil. Gentle little tears were running down her cheeks.

"Come," said George, as he embraced her and kissed her on the eyes and mouth. "Come, Anna," he repeated even more tenderly, and kissed her again. "What are you crying for, dear? It will be so nice."

"It's easy enough for you," she said, and the tears streamed on down her smiling face.

They had a beautiful time. They first stopped in Munich. They walked about in the lofty halls of the Pinakothek, stood fascinated in front of the old darkening pictures, wandered into the Glyptothek between marble gods, kings and heroes; and when Anna with a sudden feeling of exhaustion sat down on a settee she felt George's tender glance lingering over her head. They drove through the English garden, over broad avenues beneath the still leafless trees, nestling close to each other, young and happy, and were glad to think that people took them for a honeymoon couple. And they had their seats next to each other at the opera, *Figaro*, *The Meistersingers*, and *Tristan*, and they felt as though a resonant transparent veil were woven around them alone out of the notes they loved so well, which separated them from all the rest of the audience. And they sat, unrecognised by any one at prettily-laid little restaurant tables, ate, drank and talked in the best of spirits. And through streets that had the wondrous atmosphere of a foreign land, they wandered home to where the gentle night waited for them in the room they shared, slept peacefully cheek by cheek, and when they awoke there smiled to them from the window a friendly day with which they could do whatever they liked. They found peace in each other as they had never done before, and at last belonged to each other absolutely. Then they travelled further to meet the call of the spring; through long valleys on which the snow shone and melted, then, as though traversing one last white winter dream, over the Brenner to Bozen, where they basked in the sunbeams at noon in the dazzling market-place. On the weather-worn steps of the vast amphitheatre of Verona, beneath the cool sky of an Easter evening, George found himself at last in sight of that world of his heart's desire into which a real true love was now vouchsafed to accompany him. His own vanished boyhood greeted him out of the pale reddish distance together with all the eternal memories, in

which other men and women had their share as well. Why, even a breath of those bygone days when his mother had still lived seemed to thrill already through this air with its familiar and yet foreign atmosphere. He was glad to see Venice, but it had lost its magic and was as well known as though he had only left it yesterday. He was greeted in the Piazza St. Marco by some casual Viennese acquaintances, and the veiled lady by his side in the white dress earned many an inquisitive glance. Once only, late at evening, on a gondola journey through the narrow canals did the looming palaces, which in the daylight had gradually degenerated into artificial scenery, appear to him in all the massive splendour of the dark golden glories of their past. Then came a few days in towns, which he scarcely knew or did not know at all, in which he had only spent a few hours as a boy, or had never been in at all. They walked into a dim church out of a sultry Padua afternoon, and going slowly from altar to altar contemplated the simple glorious pictures in which saints accomplished their miracles and fulfilled their martyrdoms. On a dismal rainy day a jolty gloomy carriage took them past a brick-red fort, round which lay greenish-grey water in a broad moat, through a market-square where negligently dressed citizens sat in front of the café; among silent mournful streets, where grass grew between the cobble-stones, and they had perforce to believe that this pitifully-dying petty town bore the resounding name of Ferrara. But they breathed again in Bologna, where the lively flourishing town does not simply content itself with a mere pride in its bygone glories. But it was only when George gazed at the hills of Fiesole that he felt himself greeted as it were by a second home. This was the town in which he had ceased to be a boy, the town in which the stream of life had begun to course through his veins. At many places memories floated up in his mind which he kept to himself; and when in the cathedral, where the Florentine girl had given him her final look from beneath her bridal veil, he only spoke to Anna about that hour in the Altlerchenfelder Church in that autumn evening, when they had both begun to talk with some dim presentiment about this journey, which had now become realised with such inconceivable rapidity. He showed Anna the house in which he had lived nine years ago. The same shops in which coral-dealers, watch-makers and lace-dealers hawked their wares were still underneath. As the second story was to let George would have had no difficulty in seeing immediately the room in which his mother had died. But he hesitated for a long time to set foot in the house again. It was only on the day before their departure, as though feeling that he should not put it off any more, that alone and without any previous word to Anna, he went into the house, up the stairs and into the room. The aged porter showed him round and did not recognise him. The same furniture was still all there.

His mother's bedroom looked exactly the same as it had done ten years ago, and the same brown wooden bed with its dark-green silver embroidered velvet coverlet still stood in the same corner. But none of the emotions which George had expected stirred within him. A tired memory which seemed flatter and duller than it had ever been before, ran through his soul. He stayed a long time in front of the bed with the deliberate intention of conjuring up those emotions which he felt it was his duty to feel. He murmured the word "mother," he tried to imagine the way in which she had lain here in this bed for many days and nights. He remembered the hours in which she had felt better, and he had been able to read aloud to her or to play to her on the piano in the adjoining room. He looked at the little round table standing in the corner over which his father and Felician had spoken in a soft whisper because his mother had just gone to sleep; and finally there arose up in his mind with all the sharp vividness of a theatrical scene the picture of that dreadful evening, when his father and brother had gone out, and he himself had sat at his mother's bedside quite alone with her hand in his... he saw and heard it all over again. He remembered how she had suddenly felt ill after an extremely quiet day, how he had hurriedly opened the windows and the laughter and speeches of strange people had penetrated into the room with the warm March air, how she lay there at last with open eyes that

were already blank, while her hair that only a few seconds ago had streamed in waves over her forehead and temple lay dry and dishevelled on the pillow, and her left arm hung down naked over the edge of the bed with still fingers stretched far apart. This image arose in his mind with such terrible vividness that he saw again mentally his own boyish face and heard once again his own long sobbing... but he felt no pain. It was far too long ago — nearly ten years.

"*E bellissima la vista di questa finestra*," suddenly said the porter behind him as he opened the window — and human voices at once rang into the room from down below just as they had done on that long-past evening. And at the same moment he heard his mother's voice in his ear, just as he had heard it then entreating, dying... "George... George"... and out of the dark corner in the place where the pillows had used to lie he saw something pale shine out towards him. He went to the window and agreed: "*Bellissima vista*," but in front of the beautiful view there lay as it were a dark veil. "Mother," he murmured, and once again "Mother"... but to his own amazement he did not mean the woman who had borne him and had been buried long ago; the word was for that other woman, who was not yet a mother but who was to be in a few months... the mother of a child of which he was the father. And the word suddenly rang out, as though some melody that had never been heard or understood before, were now sounding, as though bells with mystic chiming were swinging in the distant future. And George felt ashamed that he had come here alone, had, as it were, almost stolen here. It was now quite out of the question to tell Anna that he had been here.

The next day they took the train to Rome. And while George felt fresher, more at home, more in the vein for enjoyment, with each succeeding day, Anna began to suffer seriously from a feeling of exhaustion with increasing frequency. She would often remain behind alone in the hotel, while he strolled about the streets, wandered through the Vatican, went to the Forum and the Palatine. She never kept him back, but he nevertheless felt himself bound to cheer her up before he went out, and got into the habit of saying: "Well, you'll keep that for another time, I hope we shall soon be coming here again." Then she would smile in her arch way, as though she did not doubt now that she would one day be his wife; and he himself could not help owning that he no longer regarded that development as impossible. For it had gradually become almost impossible for him to realise that they were to say goodbye for ever and to go their several ways this autumn. Yet during this period the words with which they spoke about a remote future were always vague. He had fear of it, and she felt that she would be doing well not to arouse that fear, and it was just during these Roman days, when he would often walk about alone in the foreign town for hours on end, that he felt as though he were at times slipping away from Anna in a manner that was not altogether unpleasant.

One evening he had wandered about amid the ruins of the Imperial Palace until the approach of dusk and from the height of the Palatine Hill he had seen the sun set in the Campagna with all the proud delight of the man who is alone. He had then gone driving for a while along the ancient wall of the city to Monte Pincio, and when as he leant back in the corner of his carriage he swept the roofs with his look till he saw the cupola of St. Peter's, he felt with deep emotion that he was now experiencing the most sublime hour of the whole journey. He did not get back to the hotel till late, and found Anna standing by the window pale and in tears, with red spots on her swollen cheeks. She had been dying of nervousness for the last two hours, had imagined that he had had an accident, had been attacked, had been killed. He reassured her, but did not find the words of affection which she wanted, for he felt in some unworthy way a sense of being tied and not free. She felt his coldness and gave him to understand that he did not love her enough; he answered with an irritation that verged on despair. She called him callous and selfish. He bit his lip, made no further answer, and walked up and down the room. Still unreconciled they went into the dining-room, where they took their meal in silence, and went to bed without saying good-night.

The following days were under the shadow of this scene. It was only on the journey to Naples, when they were alone in the compartment, that in their joy over the new scenery to which they were flying they found each other again. From henceforward he scarcely left her a single minute, she seemed to him helpless and somewhat pathetic. He gave up visiting museums since she could not accompany him. They drove together to Posilippo and walked in the Villa Nationale. In the excursion through Pompeii he walked next to her sedan-chair like a patient affectionate husband, and while the guide was giving his descriptive account in bad French, George took Anna's hand, kissed it and endeavoured in enthusiastic words to make her share in the delight that he himself felt once more in this mysterious roofless town, which after a burial of two thousand years had gradually returned street by street, house by house, to meet the unchanging light of that azure sky. And when they stopped at a place where some labourers were just engaged in extricating with careful movements of their shovels a broken pillar out of the ashes he pointed it out to Anna with eyes which shone as brightly as though he had been storing up this sight for her for a long time, and as though everything which had happened before had simply been leading up to the fulfilment of his purpose of taking her to this particular place at this particular minute and showing her this particular wonder.

On a dark blue May night they lay in two chairs covered with tarpaulins on the deck of the ship that was taking them to Genoa. An old Frenchman with clear eyes, who had sat opposite them at dinner, stood near them for a while and drew their attention to the stars that hung in the infinitude like heavy silver drops. He named some of them by name, politely and courteously, as though he felt it incumbent upon him to introduce to each other the shining wanderers of heaven and the young married couple. He then said good-night and went down into his cabin. But George thought of his lonely journey over the same route and under the same sky in the previous spring after his farewell from Grace. He had told Anna about her, not so much from any emotional necessity, as in order to free his past from that atmosphere of sinister mystery in which it often seemed to Anna to disappear, by the conjuring up into life of a specific shape and the designation of a specific name. Anna knew of Labinski's death, of George's conversation with Grace at Labinski's grave, of George's stay with her in Sicily. He had even shown her a picture of Grace; and yet he thought to himself with a slight shudder how little Anna herself knew of this very epoch of his life, which he had described to her with an almost reckless lack of reserve; and he felt how impossible it was to give any other person any idea of a period which that person had not actually lived through, and of the contents of so many days and nights every minute of which had been full of vivid life. He realised the comparative insignificance of the little lapses from truth of which he frequently allowed himself to be guilty in his narrative, compared with that ineradicable taint of falseness to which every memory gives birth on its short journey from the lips of one person to the ear of another. And if Anna herself at some later time wanted to describe to some friend, some new lover, as honestly as she possibly could, the time which she spent with George, what after all could that friend really learn? Not much more than a story such as he had read hundreds of times over in books: a story of a young creature who had loved a young man, had travelled about with him, had felt ecstasy and at times tedium, had felt herself at one with him, and yet had frequently felt lonely. And even if she should make an attempt to give a specific account of every minute... there still remained an irrevocable past, and for him who has not lived through it himself the past can never be the truth.

The stars glistened above him. Anna's head had sunk slowly upon his breast and he supported it gently with his hands. Only the slight ripple in the depths betrayed that the ship was sailing onward. But it still went on towards the morning, towards home, towards the future.

The *hour* which had loomed over them so long in silence seemed now about to strike and to begin. George suddenly felt that he no longer had his fate in his own hand. Everything was going its course. And he now felt

in his whole body, even to the hairs of his head, that the ship beneath his feet was relentlessly hurrying forward.

They only remained a day in Genoa. Both longed for rest, and George for his work as well. They meant to stay only a few weeks at an Italian lake and to travel home in the middle of June. The house in which Anna was going to live would be bound to be ready by then. Frau Golowski had found out half-a-dozen suitable ones, sent specific details to Anna and was waiting for her decision, though she still continued looking for others in case of emergency. They travelled from Milan to Genoa, but they could not stand the noisy life of a town any longer and left for Lugano the very next day.

They had been staying here for a period of four weeks and every morning George went along the road which took him, as it did to-day, along the cheerful shore of the lake, past *Paradiso* to the bend, where there was a view which every time he longed to see again. Only a few days of their stay were still before them. In spite of the excellent state of Anna's health since the beginning of their stay the time had arrived to return to the vicinity of Vienna, so as to be able to be ready confidently for all emergencies. The days in Lugano struck George as the best he had experienced since his departure from Vienna. And he asked himself during many a beautiful moment, if the time he was spending here was not perhaps the best time of his whole life. He had never felt himself so free from desire, so serene both in anticipation and memory, and he saw with joy that Anna also was completely happy. Expectant gentleness shone in her forehead, her eyes gleamed with arch merriment, as at the time when George had wooed for their possession. Without anxiety, without impatience and lifted by the consciousness of her budding motherhood far above the memory of home prejudices or any question of future complications, she anticipated with ecstasy the great hour when she was to give back to the waiting world as an animate creature, that which her body had drunk in during a half-conscious moment of ecstasy. George saw with joy the maturing in her of the comrade that he had hoped to find in her from the beginning, but who had so frequently escaped him in the course of the last few months. In their conversations about his works (all of which she had carefully gone through), about the theory of the song, about the more general musical questions, she revealed to him more knowledge and feeling than he had ever suspected she had in her. And he himself, though he did not actually compose much, felt as though he were making real strides forward. Melodies resounded within him, harmonies heralded their approach, and he remembered with deep understanding a remark of Felician's, who had once said after he had not had a sword in his hand for months on end, that his arm had had some good ideas during this period. The future, too, occasioned him no anxiety. He knew that serious work would begin as soon as he got back to Vienna, and then his way would lie before him, clear and unencumbered.

George stood for a long time by the bend in the road which had been the object of his walk. A short broad tongue of land, thickly overgrown with low shrubs, stretched from here straight into the lake, while a narrow gently sloping path led in a few steps to a wooden seat which was invisible from the street and on which George was always accustomed to sit down a little before returning to the hotel.

"How many more times," he could not help thinking to-day. "Five or six times perhaps and then back to Vienna again." And he asked himself what would happen if they did not go back, if they settled down in some house somewhere in Italy or Switzerland, and began to build up with their child a new life in the double peacefulness of Nature and distance. What would happen?... Nothing. Scarcely any one would be particularly surprised. And no one would miss either him or her, miss them with real grief. These reflections made his mood flippant rather than melancholy; the only thought that made him depressed was that he was frequently overcome by a kind of homesickness, a kind of desire in fact to see certain specific persons. And even now, while he was drinking in the lake air, surrendering himself to the blue of this half foreign, half familiar sky

above him and enjoying all the pleasure of solitude and retirement, his heart would beat when he thought of the woods and hills around Vienna, of the Ringstrasse, the club and his big room with the view of the Stadtpark. And he would have felt anxious if his child had not been going to be born in Vienna. It suddenly occurred to him that another letter from Frau Golowski must have arrived to-day together with many other communications from Vienna, and he therefore decided to take the road round by the post-office before going back to the hotel. For following his habit during the whole trip he had his letters addressed there and not to the hotel, since he felt that this would give him a freer hand in dealing with any outside emergency. He did not, as a matter of fact, get many letters from Vienna. There was usually in spite of their brevity a certain element in Heinrich's letters which, as George quite appreciated, was less due to any particular need of sympathy on the part of the author than to the circumstance that it was an integral part of his literary calling to breathe the breath of life into all the sentences which he wrote. Felician's letters were as cool as though he had completely forgotten that last heartfelt talk in George's room and that brotherly kiss with which they had taken leave of each other.... He presumes, no doubt, thought George, that his letters will be read by Anna too, and does not feel himself bound to give this stranger an insight into his private affairs and his private feelings. Nürnberger had sent a few short answers to George's picture-postcards, while in answer to a letter from Rome, in which George had referred to his sincere appreciation of the walks they had had together in the early spring, Nürnberger expressed his regret in ironically apologetic phrases that he had told George on those excursions such a lot about his own family affairs which could not interest him in the slightest. A letter from old Eissler had reached him at Naples, informing him that there was no prospect of a vacancy for the following year at the Detmold Court Theatre, but that George had been invited through Count Malnitz to be present at the rehearsals and performances as a "visitor by special request," and that this was an opportunity which might perhaps pave the way to something more definite in the future. George had given the proposition his polite consideration, but had little inclination for the time being to stay in the foreign town for any length of time with such vague prospects, and had decided to look out for a permanent appointment as soon as he arrived at Vienna.

Apart from this there was no personal note in any of the letters from home. The remembrances to him which Frau Rosner felt in duty bound to append to her letters to her daughter made no particular appeal, although recently they had been addressed not to the Herr Baron but to George. He felt certain that Anna's parents were simply resigned to what they could not alter, but that they felt it grievously all the same, and had not shown themselves as broad-minded as would have been desirable.

In accordance with his habit George did not go back along the bank. Passing through narrow streets between garden walls, then under arcades and finally over a wide space from which there was another clear view of the lake, he arrived in front of the post-office, whose bright yellow paint reflected the dazzling rays of the sun. A young lady whom George had already seen in the distance walking up and down the pavement, remained standing as he approached. She was dressed in white and carried a white sunshade spread out over a broad straw hat with a red ribbon. When George was quite near she smiled, and he now suddenly saw a well-known face beneath the white spotted tulle veil.

"Is it really you, Fräulein Therese?" he exclaimed as he took the hand which she held out to him.

"How do you do, Baron?" she replied innocently, as though this meeting were the most ordinary event imaginable. "How is Anna?"

"Very well, thanks. Of course you will come and see her?"

"If I may."

"But tell me now, what are you doing here? Can it be that you" — and his glance swept her in amazement

from top to toe— “are making a political tour?”

“I can’t exactly say that,” she replied, pushing out her chin, without that movement having its usual effect of making her face appear ugly, “it’s more of a holiday jaunt.” And her face shone with a genuine smile as she saw George’s glance turn towards the door, from which Demeter Stanzides had just come out in a striped black-and-white flannel suit. He lifted his grey felt hat in salutation and shook hands with George.

“Good-morning, Baron. Glad to see you again.”

“I am very glad, too, Herr Stanzides.”

“No letter for me?” Therese turned to Demeter.

“No, Therese. Only a few cards for me,” and he put them in his pocket.

“How long have you been here?” inquired George, endeavouring to exhibit as little surprise as possible.

“We arrived yesterday,” replied Demeter.

“Straight from Vienna?” asked George.

“No, from Milan. We have been travelling for eight days. We were first in Venice, that is the orthodox thing to do,” added Therese, pulled down her veil and took Demeter’s arm.

“You been away much longer?” said Demeter. “I saw a card from you some weeks back at Ehrenbergs’, the house of the Vettii, Pompeii.”

“Yes, I’ve had a wonderful trip.”

“Well, we’ll have a look round the place a bit,” said Therese, “and besides, we don’t want to detain the Baron any more. I am sure he wants to go and fetch his letters.”

“Oh, there is no hurry about that. Anyway, we’ll see each other again.”

“Will you give us the pleasure, Baron,” said Demeter, “of lunching with us to-day at the Europe? That’s where we put up.”

“Thanks very much, but I’m afraid it’s impossible. But... but perhaps you could manage to dine with... with... us at the Park Hotel, yes? At half-past seven if that’s all right for you. I’ll have it served in the garden, under an awfully fine plane-tree, where we usually take our meals.”

“Yes,” said Therese, “we accept with thanks. Perhaps I’ll come in an hour earlier and have a quiet chat with Anna.”

“Good,” replied George, “she will be very glad.”

“Well, till the evening, Baron,” said Demeter, shook hands with him heartily and added: “Please give my kind regards at home.”

Therese flashed George an appreciative look, and then went on her way with Demeter towards the bank of the lake.

George looked after them. If I hadn’t known her, he thought, Demeter could have introduced her to me straight away as his wife, née Princess X. How strange, those two.... He then went into the hall, had his correspondence given to him at the counter and ran cursorily through it. The first thing which caught his eye was a card from Leo Golowski. There was nothing on it except “Dear George, mind you have a good time.” Then there was a card from the Waldsteingarten in the Prater, “We have just emptied our glasses to the health of our runaway friend. Guido Schönstein, Ralph Skelton, the Rattenmamsell.”

George wanted to read the letters from Felician, Frau Rosner and Heinrich quietly at home with Anna. He was also in a hurry to inform Anna of the news of the strange couple’s arrival. He was not quite free from anxiety, for Anna’s conventional instincts had a knack of waking up occasionally in a quite unexpected manner. Anyway, George decided to tell her of his invitation to Demeter and Therese as though it were an absolute matter of course and was quite ready, in case she should feel hurt or irritated or even have doubts

about the matter, to oppose such an attitude firmly and resolutely. He himself was very glad of the evening which was before him after the many weeks that he had spent exclusively in Anna's society. He almost felt a little envious of Demeter, who was on an irresponsible pleasure-trip like he himself when he had gone travelling with Grace in the previous year. Then it occurred to him that he liked Therese better than ever. In spite of the numerous pretty women whom he had met in the course of the last month he had never felt seriously tempted, even though Anna was losing more and more of her womanly grace. To-day for the first time he felt a desire for new embraces.

He soon saw Anna's light-blue morning dress shining through the railings of the balcony. George whistled the first notes of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, which was his usual method of announcing himself, and the pale gentle face of his beloved immediately appeared over the railings and her big eyes greeted him with a smile. He held up the packet of letters, she nodded with pleasure and he hurried quickly up to her room and on to the balcony. She was reclining in a cane chair in front of the little table with the green coverlet, on which some needlework was lying, as was nearly always the case when George came home from his morning walk. He kissed her on the forehead and on the mouth. "Well, whom do you think I met?" he asked hurriedly.

"Else Ehrenberg," answered Anna, without considering.

"What an idea? How could she get here?"

"Well," said Anna slyly, "she might have travelled off to find you."

"She might, but she didn't. So guess again. I give you three guesses."

"Heinrich Bermann."

"Nowhere near it. Besides there is a letter from him. So guess again."

She reflected. "Demeter Stanzides," she then said.

"What, do you really know something?"

"What should I know? Is he really here?"

"By Jove, you are positively blushing. Ho ho!" He knew of her weakness for Demeter's melancholy cavalier beauty but did not feel the slightest trace of jealousy.

"So it is Stanzides?" she asked.

"Yes, it is Stanzides right enough. But with all the will in the world I can't find anything remarkable about that. It's not remarkable, either. But if you guess whom he is with...."

"With Sissy Wyner."

"But...."

"Well, I was thinking of marriage.... That happens too sometimes."

"No, not with Sissy, and not married, but with your friend Therese, and as unmarried as possible."

"Get along...."

"I tell you, with Therese. They've been travelling for eight days. What have you got to say to that? They have been in Venice and Milan. Had you any idea of it?"

"No."

"Really not?"

"Really not. You know of course that Therese only once wrote me a line, and you read her letter with your well-known interest."

"You're not astonished enough."

"Good gracious, I always knew that she had good taste."

"So has Demeter," exclaimed George with conviction.

"Elective affinities," remarked Anna, elevating her eyebrows, and went on crocheting.

“And so this is the mother of my child,” said George, with a merry shake of his head.

She looked at him with a smile. “When is she coming to see me, then?”

“In the afternoon about six, I think. And... and Stanzides is coming too... a bit later. They are going to dine with us. You don’t mind?”

“Mind? I’m very glad,” replied Anna simply.

George was agreeably surprised. If Anna in her present condition had met Stanzides in Vienna!... he thought. How being away from one’s usual environment frees and purifies!

“What news did they tell you?” asked Anna.

“We stood chatting together at the post-office for scarcely three minutes. He sends his regards to you, by the way.”

Anna made no answer and it seemed to George as though her thoughts were travelling again on extremely conventional lines.

“Have you been up long?” he asked quickly.

“Yes, I have been sitting here on the balcony for quite a long time. I even went to sleep a bit, the air is so enervating to-day somehow. And I dreamed, too.”

“What did you dream about?”

“Of the child,” she said.

“Again?”

She nodded. “Just the same as the other day. I was sitting here on the balcony in my dream, and had it in my arms at the breast....”

“But what was it, a boy or a girl?”

“I don’t know. Just a child. So tiny and so sweet. And the joy was so.... No I won’t give it up,” she said softly with closed eyes.

He stood leaning on the railing and felt the light noon wind stroke his hair. “If you don’t want to give it out to nurse,” he said, “well you mustn’t.” And the thought ran through his mind, “Wouldn’t it be the most convenient thing to marry her?...” But something or other kept him back from saying so. They were both silent. He had laid the letters in front of him on the table. He now took them up and opened one. “Let’s see, first, what your mother writes?” he said.

Frau Rosner’s letter contained the news that all was well at home, that they would all be very glad to see Anna again, and that Josef had got a post on the staff of the *Volksbote* with a salary of fifty gulden a month. Further, an inquiry had come from Frau Bittner as to when Anna was coming back from Dresden, and if it was really certain that she would be back again next autumn, because otherwise they would of course have to look about for a new teacher.... Anna stood motionless and expressed no opinion.

Then George read out Heinrich’s letter. It ran as follows:

“Dear George,

“I am very glad that you will be back so soon, and prefer to tell you so to-day, because once you are there I shall never tell you how very glad I shall be to see you. A few days ago, when I went for a lonely cycle ride along the Danube, I genuinely missed you. What an overwhelming atmosphere of loneliness these banks have! I remember having once felt like that five or six years ago on a Sunday, when I was in what is technically known as ‘jolly company,’ and was sitting in the Kloster-neuburger beer-house in the large garden with its view of the mountains and the fields. How it ascends from the depths of the waters, loneliness I mean, which certainly is quite a different thing to what one usually thinks it is. It is very far from being the opposite of society. Yet it is only perhaps when one is with other people that one has a right to feel lonely. Just take

this as an aphoristical humorously untrue special supplement, or treat it as such and lay it aside. To come back to my ride along the banks of the Danube — it was on that same rather sultry evening that I had all kinds of good ideas, and I hope soon to be able to tell you a lot of startling news about Ägidius, for that's the name that the murderous melancholy youth has got at last, about the deep-thinking impenetrable prince, about the humorous Duke Heliodorus, the name by which I have the honour of introducing to you the Princess's betrothed, and especially about the princess herself, who seems to be a far more remarkable person than I originally supposed."

"That's to do with the opera plot?" asked Anna, dropping her work.

"Of course," replied George, and went on reading.

"You must also know, my dear friend, that I have finished during the last week some verses for the first act, which so far are not particularly immortal, verses which until some further development, so long I mean, as they are without your music, will hop about the world like wingless angels. The subject-matter appeals to me extraordinarily, and I myself am curious to know what I am really going to make of it. I've begun all kinds of other things as well... sketched things out... thought things over. And to put it shortly and with a certain amount of cheek I feel as though a new phase were heralding itself within me. This sounds of course greater cheek than it really is. For chimney-sweeps, ice-cream vendors and colour-sergeants have their phases as well. People of our temperament always recognise it at once. What I regard as very probable is that I shall soon leave the fantastic element in which I now feel so much at home, and will either move up or move down into something extremely real. What would you say, for example, if I were to go in for a political comedy? I feel already that the word 'real' is not quite the right one. For in my view politics is the most fantastic element in which persons can possibly move, the only thing is they don't notice it.... This is the point I ought to drive home. This occurred to me the other day when I was present at a political meeting (untrue, I always get these thoughts). Yes — a meeting of working men and women in the Brigittenau in which I found myself next to Mademoiselle Therese Golowski, and at which I was compelled to hear seven speeches about universal suffrage. Each of the speakers — Therese was one of them, too — spoke just as though the solution of that question was the most important thing in the world to him or her personally, and I don't think that any of them had an idea that the whole question was a matter of colossal indifference to them at the real bottom of their hearts. Therese was very indignant of course when I enlightened her on the point, and declared that I had been infected by the poisonous scepticism of Nürnberger, of whom as a matter of fact I'm seeing far too much. She always makes a point of running him down, since he asked her some time ago in the café whether she was going to have her hair done high or in plaits at her next trial for high treason. Anyway, I find it very nice seeing a lot of Nürnberger. When I'm having my bad days, there is no one who receives me with more kindness. Only there are many days whose badness he doesn't suspect or doesn't want to know of. There are various troubles which I feel that he fails to appreciate and which I've given up talking to him about."

"What does he mean?" interrupted Anna.

"The affair with the actress, clearly," replied George, and went on reading.

"On the other hand he is inclined to make up for that by taking other troubles of mine too seriously. That is probably my fault and not his. He manifested a sympathy towards me for the loss I sustained by my father's death, which I confess made me positively ashamed; for though it hit me dreadfully hard we had grown so aloof from one another quite a long time before his madness burst upon him, that his death simply signified a further and more ghastly barrier rather than a new experience."

"Well?" asked Anna, as George stopped.

"I've just got an idea."

"What is it?"

"Nürnberger's sister lies buried in the Cadenabbia cemetery. I told you about her. I'll run over one of these days."

Anna nodded. "Perhaps I'll go too, if I feel all right. From all I hear of him I find Nürnberger much more sympathetic than that horrible egoist your friend Heinrich."

"You think so?"

"But really, the way he writes about his father. It is almost intolerable."

"Hang it all! if people who have grown so estranged as those two — —"

"All the same, I haven't really very much in common with my own parents temperamentally either, and yet.... If I.... No, no, I prefer not to talk about such things. Won't you go on reading?"

George read:

"There are more serious things than death, things which are certainly sadder, because these other things lack the finality which takes away the sadness of death, if viewed from the higher standpoint. For instance, there are living ghosts who walk about the streets in the clear daylight with eyes that have died long ago and yet see, ghosts who sit down next to one and talk with a human voice that has a far more distant ring than if it came from a grave. And one might go so far as to say that the essential awfulness of death is revealed to a far greater extent in moments when one has experiences like this, than at those times when one stands near and watches somebody being lowered into the earth... however near that somebody was."

George involuntarily dropped the letter and Anna said with emphasis: "Well, you can certainly keep him to yourself — your friend Heinrich."

"Yes," replied George slowly. "He is often a bit affected, and yet... hallo, there goes the first bell for lunch. Let's read quickly through to the end."

"But I must now tell you what happened yesterday: the most painful and yet ridiculous affair which I have come across for a long time, and I am sorry to say the persons concerned are our good friends the Ehrenbergs, father and son."

"Oh," cried Anna involuntarily.

George had quickly run through the lines which followed and shook his head.

"What is it?" inquired Anna.

"It is.... Just listen," and he went on reading.

"You are no doubt aware of the growing acuteness of the relations between Oskar and the old man in the course of the last year. You also know the real reasons for it, so that I can just inform you of what has taken place without going into the motives for it any further. Well, it's just like this. Yesterday Oskar passes by the Church of St. Michael about twelve o'clock midday and takes off his hat. You know that at the present time piety is about the smartest craze going, and so perhaps it is unnecessary to go into any further explanation, as, for example, that a few young aristocrats happened just to be coming out of church and that Oskar wanted to behave as a Catholic for their special benefit. God knows how often he has previously been guilty of this imposture without being found out, but as luck would have it, it happens yesterday that old Ehrenberg comes along the road at the same moment. He sees Oskar taking off his hat in front of the church door... and attacked by a fit of uncontrollable rage he gives his offspring a box on the ears then and there. A box on the ears! Oskar the lieutenant in the reserve! Midday in the centre of the town! So it is not particularly remarkable that the story was known all over the town the very same evening. It is already in some of the papers to-day. The Jewish ones leave it severely alone, except for a few scandal-mongering rags, the Anti-Semitic ones of course go for it hot and strong. The *Christliche Volksbote* is the best, and insists on both the Ehrenbergs being

brought before a jury for sacrilege or blasphemy. Oskar is said to have travelled off, no one knows where, for the time being."

"A nice family!" said Anna with conviction.

George could not help laughing against his will. "My dear girl, Else is really absolutely innocent of the whole business."

The bell rang for the second time. They went into the dining-room and took their places at a little table by the window which was always laid for them alone. Scarcely more than a dozen visitors were sitting at the long table in the middle of the room, mostly Englishmen and Frenchmen, and also a man no longer in the first flush of youth, who had been there for two days and whom George took for an Austrian officer in *mufti*. Anyway he bothered about him as little as he did about the others. George had put Heinrich's letter in his pocket. It occurred to him that he had not yet read it through to the end, and he took it out again over the coffee and perused the remainder.

"What more does he write?" asked Anna.

"Nothing special," answered George. "About people who probably wouldn't interest you particularly. He seems to have got in again with his café set; more in fact than he likes and clearly more than he owns up to."

"He'll fit in all right," said Anna flippantly.

George smiled reflectively. "It is a funny set anyway."

"And what is the news with them?" asked Anna.

George had put the letter down by the cup and now looked at it. "Little Winternitz... you know... the fellow who once recited his poems to me and Heinrich last winter... is going to Berlin as reader to a newly-founded theatre. And Gleissner, the man who stared at us once so in the museum...."

"Oh yes, that abominable fellow with the eyeglass."

"Well, he declares that he is going to give up writing to devote himself exclusively to sport...."

"To sport?"

"Yes, quite a sport of his own. He plays with human souls."

"What?"

"Just listen." He read:

"This buffoon is now asserting that he is simultaneously engaged in the solution of the two following psychological problems, which supplement each other in quite an ingenious way. The first is to bring a young and innocent creature to the lowest depth of depravity, while the second is to make a prostitute into a saint, as he puts it. He promises that he will not rest until the first one finishes up in a brothel, and the second one in a cloister."

"A nice lot," remarked Anna and got up from the table.

"How the sound carries over here," said George and followed her into the grounds.

A dark-blue day, heavy with the sun, was resting on the tops of the trees. They stood for a while by the low balustrade which separated the garden from the street and looked over the lake to the mountains looming behind silver-grey veils that fluttered in the sunlight. They then walked deeper into the grounds, where the shade was cooler and darker, and as they walked arm-in-arm over the softly-crunching gravel along the high brown ivy-grown walls, and looked in at the old houses with their narrow windows, they chatted about the news that had arrived that day, and for the first time a slight anxiety rose up in their minds at the thought that they would so soon have to leave the friendly secrecy of foreign lands for home, where even the ordinary stereotyped day seemed full of hidden dangers. They sat down beneath the plane-tree at the white lacquered table. This place had always been kept free for them, as though it had been reserved. The newly-arrived

Austrian gentleman, however, had sat there yesterday afternoon, but driven away by a disapproving glance of Anna's had gone away after a polite salutation.

George hurried up to his room and fetched a few books for Anna and a volume of Goethe's poems and the manuscript of his quintette for himself. They both sat there, read, worked, looked up at times, smiled at each other, exchanged a few words, peered again into their books, looked over the balustrade into the open, and felt peace in their souls and summer in the air. They heard the fountain plashing quite near them behind the bushes, while a few drops fell upon the surface of the water. Frequently the wheels of a carriage would crunch along on the other side of the high wall, at times faint distant whistles would sound from the lake, and less frequently human voices would ring into the garden from the road along the bank. The day, drunken to the full with sunlight, lay heavy on the tree-tops. Later on the noise and the voices increased in volume and number with the gentle wind which was wafted from the lake every afternoon. The beat of the waves on the shore was more audible. The cries of the boatman resounded: on the other side of the wall there rang out the singing of young people. Tiny drops from the fountain were sprinkled around. The breath of approaching evening woke once more human beings, land and water.

Steps were heard on the gravel. Therese, still in white, came quickly through the avenue. George got up, went a few steps to meet her and shook hands. Anna wanted to get up, too, but Therese would not allow it, embraced her, gave her a kiss on the cheek and sat down by her side. "How beautiful it is here!" she exclaimed; "but haven't I come too early?"

"What an idea! I'm really awfully glad," replied Anna.

Therese considered her with a scrutinising smile and took hold of both her hands. "Well, your appearance is reassuring," she said.

"I am very well, as a matter of fact," replied Anna, "and you look as if you were too," she joked good-humouredly.

George's eyes rested on Therese, who was again dressed in white, as she had been in the morning, though now more smartly in English embroidered linen, with a string of light pink corals round her bare throat.

While the two women were discussing the strange coincidence of their meeting George got up to give the orders for dinner. When he returned to the garden the two others were no longer there. He saw Therese on the balcony with her back leaning against the railing, talking with Anna, who was invisible and was presumably in the depths of the room. He felt in good form and walked up and down the avenue, allowed melodies to sing themselves within him, was conscious of his youth and happiness, threw an occasional glance up to the balcony or towards the street, beyond the balustrade, and at last saw Demeter Stanzides arriving. He went to meet him. "Glad to see you," he cried out in welcome from the garden gate. "The ladies are upstairs in the room but will be turning up soon. Would you like to have a look at the grounds in the meanwhile?"

"Delighted."

They went on walking together.

"Do you intend to stay much longer in Lugano?" asked George.

"No, we go to-morrow to Bellaggio, from there to Lake Maggiore, Isola Bella. A really good time never lasts. We have got to be home again in a fortnight."

"Such short leave?"

"Oh, it is not on my account, but Therese has got to go back. I am quite a free man. I have already sent in my papers."

"So you seriously mean to retire to your estate?"

"My estate?"

"Yes, I heard something to that effect at Ehrenbergs'."

"But I haven't got the estate yet, you see. It is simply in the stage of negotiations."

"And where are you going to buy one? if it is not a rude question."

"Where the foxes say good-night to each other. The last place you would think of. On the Hungarian-Croatian frontier, very lonely and remote but very remarkable. I have a certain sympathy for the district. Youthful memories. I spent three years there as a lieutenant. Of course I think I shall grow young again there. Well, who knows?"

"A fine property?"

"Not bad. I saw it again two months ago. I knew it of course in the old days, it then belonged to Count Jaczewicz, finally to a manufacturer. Then his wife died. He now feels lonely down there and wants to get rid of it."

"I don't know," said George, "but I imagine the neighbourhood a little melancholy."

"Melancholy! Well, it seems to me that at a certain period of one's life every neighbourhood acquires a melancholy appearance." And he looked round the balcony, as though to evolve from his surroundings a new proof of the truth of his words.

"At what period?"

"Well, when one begins to get old."

George smiled. Demeter struck him as so handsome and as still young in spite of the grey hairs on his temple. "How old are you then, Herr Stanzides? if it isn't a rude question."

"Thirty-seven. I don't say I am old, but I am getting old. Men usually begin to talk about getting old when they have been old for a long time."

They sat down on the seat at the end of the garden, just where it runs into the wall. They had a view of the hotel and of the great terrace on the garden. The upper storeys with their verandahs were hidden from them by the foliage of the trees. George offered Demeter a cigarette and took one himself. And both were silent for a while.

"I heard that you, too, are leaving Vienna," said Demeter.

"Yes, that's very probable... if of course I get a job in some opera. Well, even if it isn't this year it is bound to be next."

Demeter sat with legs crossed over each other, gripped one of them tightly by the knee, and nodded. "Yes, yes," he said, and blew the smoke slowly through his lips in driblets. "It is really a fine thing to have a talent. In that case one is bound to feel a bit different sometimes, even about beginning to grow old. That is really the one thing I could envy a man for."

"You have no reason to at all. Anyway, people with talent are not really to be envied. At any rate, only people with genius. And I envy them probably even more than you do. But I think that talents like yours are something much more definite, something much sounder so to speak. Of course one doesn't always happen to be in form.... But at any rate, one always achieves something quite respectable if one can do anything at all, while people in my line, if they are not in form are no better than old age pensioners."

Demeter laughed. "Yes, but an artistic talent like yours lasts longer and develops more and more as the years go on. Take Beethoven, for instance. The Ninth Symphony is really the finest thing he did. Don't you think so. And what about the second part of *Faust*?... While we are bound to go back as the years go on — we can't help it — even the Beethovens amongst us. And how early it begins, apart from quite rare exceptions! I was at my prime for instance at twenty-five. I've never done again what I had in me at twenty-five. Yes, my dear Baron, those were times."

“Come, I remember seeing you win a race two years ago against Buzgo, who was the favourite then.... Why, I even betted on him....”

“My dear Baron,” interrupted Stanzides, “you take it from me, I know the reason why I left off improving. One can feel a thing like that oneself. And that’s why no one knows so well as the sportsman when he’s beginning to grow old. And then no further training is any good. The whole thing then becomes purely artificial. And if any one tells you that that’s not the case, then he’s simply... but here come the ladies.”

They both got up. Therese and Anna were approaching arm-in-arm, one all in white, the other in a black dress, which falling to the ground in wide folds completely hid her figure. The couples met by the fountain.

Demeter kissed Anna’s hand. “What a beautiful spot I have the good fortune to see you again in, my dear lady.”

“It is a pleasant surprise to me, too,” replied Anna, “quite apart from the scenery.”

“Do you know,” said George to Anna, “that these good people are travelling off again to-morrow?”

“Yes, Therese has told me.”

“We want to see as much as possible,” explained Demeter, “and so far as my recollection goes the other lakes in upper Italy are even more magnificent than the one here.”

“I don’t know anything about the others,” said Anna. “We haven’t done them yet.”

“Well, perhaps you will take the opportunity,” said Demeter, “and make up a party with us for a little tour: Bellaggio, Pallanza, Isola Bella.”

Anna shook her head. “It would be very nice but unfortunately I can’t get about enough. Yes, I am incredibly lazy. There are whole days when I never go out of the grounds. But if George fancies running away from me for a day or two, I don’t mind at all.”

“I have no intention at all of running away from you,” said George. He threw a quick glance at Therese, whose eyes were sparkling and laughing.

They all strolled slowly through the garden while it gradually became dusk, and chatted about the places they had recently seen. When they came back to the table under the plane-tree it was laid for dinner and the fairy-lights were burning in the glass holders. The waiter was just bringing the Asti in a bucket. Anna sat down on the seat, which had the trunk of the plane-tree for its back. Therese sat opposite her and George and Demeter on either side.

The meal was served and the wine poured out. George inquired after their Viennese acquaintances. Demeter told them that Willy Eissler had brought back from his trip some brilliant caricatures both of hunters and of beasts. Old Ehrenberg had bought the pictures.

“Do you know about the Oskar affair yet?” said George.

“What affair?”

“Oh, the affair with his father in front of St. Michael’s Church.” He remembered that he had thought of telling Demeter the story some time back before the ladies had appeared, but that he had thought it right to suppress it. It was the wine, no doubt, which now loosened his tongue against his will. He told them briefly what Heinrich had written him.

“But this is an extremely sad business,” said Demeter, very much moved, and all the others immediately felt more serious.

“Why is it a sad business?” asked Therese. “I think it is enough to make one laugh till one cried.”

“My dear Therese, you don’t consider the consequences it may have for the young man.”

“Good gracious, I know well enough. It will make him impossible in a certain set, but that won’t do more than make him realise what a silly ass he has been up to the present.”

“Well,” said George, “if Oskar really is one of those people who can be made to realise anything.... But I really don’t think so.”

“Apart from the fact, my dear Therese,” added Demeter, “that what you call realising doesn’t necessarily mean seeing things in their proper light. All sets of people have their prejudices. Even you are not free from them.”

“And what prejudices have we got, I should like to know?” cried Therese, and emptied her glass of wine angrily. “We only want to clear away certain prejudices, particularly the prejudice that there is this privileged caste who regard it as a special honour....”

“Excuse, me, Therese dear, but you are not at a meeting now, and I am afraid that the applause at the conclusion of your speech will turn out much fainter than you are accustomed to.”

“Look here,” Therese turned to Anna, “this is how a cavalry officer argues.”

“I beg your pardon,” said George, “the whole business has scarcely anything at all to do with prejudices. A box on the ears in the public street, even though it is from one’s own father.... I don’t think one has got to be an officer in the reserve or a student.”

“That box on the ears,” cried Therese, “gives me a real sense of relief. It represents the well-merited conclusion of a ridiculous and superfluous existence.”

“Conclusion! We hope it’s not that,” said Demeter.

“My letter says,” replied George, “that Oskar has travelled off, no one knows where.”

“If I am sorry for any one in the business,” said Therese, “it is certainly for the old man, who, good-hearted fellow that he is, is probably regretting this very day the unpleasant position in which he has placed his beastly snob of a son.”

“Good-hearted!” exclaimed Demeter. “A millionaire! A factory owner!... My dear Therese...!”

“Yes, it does happen sometimes. He happens to be one of those people who are at one with us at the bottom of their soul. You remember the evening, Demeter, when you had the pleasure of seeing me for the first time. Do you know why I was at Ehrenbergs’ then?... And do you know the object for which he gave me straight away a thousand gulden...? To....” She bit her lips. “I mustn’t say, that was the condition.”

Suddenly Demeter got up and bowed to somebody who had just passed. It was the Austrian gentleman who had arrived yesterday. He lifted his hat and vanished in the darkness of the garden.

“Do you know that man?” asked George, after a few seconds. “I also seem to know him, but who is it?”

“The Prince of Guastalla,” said Demeter.

“Really!” exclaimed Therese involuntarily, and her eyes pierced into the darkness.

“What are you looking at him for?” said Demeter. “He is just a man like any one else.”

“He is supposed to be banished from Court,” said George, “isn’t he?”

“I know nothing about that,” replied Demeter, “but he is certainly not a favourite there. He recently published a pamphlet about certain conditions in our army, particularly the life of the officers in the provinces. It went very much against him, although as a matter of fact there is nothing really bad in it.”

“He should have applied to me about that,” said Therese. “I could have given him a tip or two.”

“My dear child,” said Demeter deprecatingly, “what you are probably referring to again is simply an exceptional case. You shouldn’t jump at once into generalities.”

“I am not generalising, but a case like that is sufficient to damn the whole....”

“Don’t make a speech, Therese....”

“I am speaking about Leo.” Therese turned to George. “It is really awful what he has been going through this year.”

George suddenly remembered that Therese was Leo's sister, as though it were a most remarkable thing which he had completely forgotten. Did he know that she was here and whom she was with?

Demeter bit his lips somewhat nervously.

"There is an Anti-Semitic First-Lieutenant, you know," said Therese, "who rags him in a particularly mean way because he knows how Leo despises him."

George nodded. He knew all about it.

"My dear child," said Demeter, "I can't make it out, as I have already told you several times. I happen to know First-Lieutenant Sefranek, and I assure you it is possible to get on with him. He is not particularly clever, and it may be quite right to say that he has got no particular liking for the Israelites, but after all one must admit that there are a lot of so-called opprobrious Anti-Semitic expressions which really have no significance at all, and which, so far as my experience goes, are used by Jews quite as much as by Christians. And your worthy brother certainly suffers from a morbid sensitiveness."

"Sensitiveness is never morbid," retorted Therese. "It is only lack of sensitiveness which is a disease, and the most loathsome one I know as a matter of fact. It is notorious that I am as far apart as possible from my brother in my political views. You know that best of all, George. I hate Jewish bankers quite as much as feudal landed proprietors, and orthodox Rabbis quite as much as Catholic priests; but if a man feels himself superior to me because he belongs to another creed or another race than I do, and being conscious of his greater power makes me feel that superiority, I would.... Well, I don't know what I would do to a man like that. But anyway I should quite understand Leo if he were to take the next opportunity of going tooth-and-nail for Herr Sefranek."

"My dear child," said Demeter, "if you have the slightest influence with your brother you should try and stop this tooth-and-nail business at any price. In my view by far the best thing to do in a case like that is to go about things in the respectable, I mean the regulation way. It is really not at all true that that never does any good. The superior officers are mostly quiet people, at any rate they are correct and...."

"But Leo did that long ago... as far back as February. He went to the Major, the Major was very nice to him, and as appears from many indications gave the First-Lieutenant a good talking to; the only thing is it unfortunately wasn't the slightest use. On the contrary, the next chance he had the First-Lieutenant made a special point of starting his beastly tricks again, and he is continuing them with the most refined malice. I assure you, Baron, I am afraid every single day that some misfortune will happen."

Demeter shook his head. "We live in a mad age. I assure you" — he turned to George— "First-Lieutenant Sefranek is no more of an Anti-Semite than you or I. He visits at Jewish houses. I even know that he was extremely intimate for years with a Jewish regimental doctor. It really seems as though everybody were going mad."

"You may be right in that," said Therese.

"Oh, well, Leo is so reasonable," said George. "He is so sensible in spite of all his temperament that I am convinced that he won't let himself be swept away by any foolish impulse. After all he must know that it will all be over in a few months; one can manage to put up with it for that time."

"Do you know, by-the-by, Baron," said Therese, while following the example of the men she took a cigarette out of a box which the waiter had brought, "do you know that Leo was quite charmed with your compositions?"

"What, charmed?" said George, while he gave Therese a light. "I really hadn't noticed it at all."

"Well, he liked some things," qualified Therese, "and that's practically the same as somebody else being delighted with them."

“Have you composed anything on your trip?” asked Demeter courteously.

“Only a few songs.”

“I suppose we shall hear them in the autumn?” said Demeter.

“Good gracious, don’t let’s talk about the autumn,” said Therese. “We may be dead or in prison before then.”

“Well, if one really wants to one can manage to avoid the latter alternative,” exclaimed Demeter.

Therese shrugged her shoulders. George was sitting near her and believed he could feel the warmth of her body. Lights were shining from the hotel windows and a long reddish strip reached the table at which the two couples were sitting.

“I suggest,” said George, “that we make the best of the fine evening and go for another walk along the shore.”

“Or take a boat,” exclaimed Therese.

They all agreed. George ran up to the room to fetch wraps. When he came down again he found the others standing by the door of the grounds ready to start. He helped Anna into her light-grey cloak, hung his own long overcoat over Therese’s shoulders and kept a dark-green rug over his arm. They went slowly through the avenue to the place where the boats were moored. Two boatmen took the party with quick strokes of their oars out of the darkness of the shore into the black shining water. The mountains towered up to the sky, monstrous and gigantic. The stars were not very numerous. Tiny bluish-grey clouds hung in the air. The rowers sat on two cross benches; in the middle of the boat on narrow seats the two couples sat opposite each other: George and Anna, Demeter and Therese. All were quite silent at first, it was only after some minutes that George broke the silence. He told them the name of the mountain which separated the lake from the South, drew their attention to a village, which though it seemed infinitely far away as it nestled up to the slope of a cliff could nevertheless be reached in a quarter of an hour; he recognised the white shining house on the height above Lugano as the hotel in which Demeter and Therese were staying and told them about a walk far into the country between sunny vineyards which he had taken the other day.

While he spoke Anna kept hold of his hand underneath the rug. Demeter and Therese sat next to each other staidly and correctly, and not at all like lovers who had only found each other a short time ago. It was only now that George gradually recovered his fancy for Therese, which had almost vanished during her loud violent speechifying.

How long will this Demeter affair last? he thought. Will it be over when the autumn comes or will it after all last as long or longer than my affair with Anna? Will this row on the dark lake be some time in the future just a memory of something that has completely vanished, just like my row on the Veldeser Lake with that peasant girl, which now comes into my mind again for the first time for years?... Or like my voyage with Grace across the sea? How strange! Anna is holding my hand, I am pressing it, and who knows if she isn’t feeling at this very minute something similar with regard to Demeter to what I am feeling about Therese? No, I am sure not.... She carries a child under her heart which has already quickened.... That’s why.... Hang it all!... Why, it’s my child as well.... Our child is now going for a row on the lake of Lugano.... Shall I tell it one day that it went for a row round the lake of Lugano before it was born? How will it all turn out? We shall be back in Vienna again in a few days. Does Vienna really exist? It will only slowly begin to come into existence again as we train back.... Yes, that’s how it is.... As soon as I’m home work will start seriously. I shall remain quietly at my home in Vienna and just visit Anna from time to time; I won’t live with her in the country.... Or at all events only just before... and the autumn.... Shall I be in Detmold? And where will Anna be? And the child?... With strangers somewhere in the country. How improbable the whole thing seems!...

But it was also very improbable a year ago to-day that I and Stanzides should go for a row on the lake of Lugano with Fräulein Anna Rosner and Fräulein Therese Golowski respectively. And now the whole thing couldn't be more of a matter of course.... He suddenly heard with abnormal clearness, as though he had just woken up, Demeter's voice quite near him.

"When does our boat leave to-morrow?"

"Nine o'clock in the morning," replied Therese.

"She maps out the plan of campaign you know," said Demeter. "I don't need to bother about anything."

The moon suddenly shone out over the lake.

It seemed as though it had waited behind the mountains and were now coming out to say goodbye. That infinitely distant village by the mountain-slope suddenly lay quite close in all its whiteness. The boat beached. Therese got up. She was shrouded in the night and looked strikingly tall. George sprang out of the boat and helped her to disembark. He felt her cool fingers, which did not tremble, in his hand, but moved softly as though on purpose, and caught the breath from her lips quite close. Demeter got out after her, then came Anna, tired and awkward. The boatman thanked them for their generous tip and both couples started to walk homewards. The Prince was sitting on a seat in a long dark cloak in the avenue along the bank. He was smoking a cigar, seemed to be looking out on to the nocturnal lake and turned away his head with the obvious intention of avoiding being saluted.

"A man like that could tell a tale," said Therese to George, with whom she had fallen further and further behind, while Demeter and Anna went on in front of them.

"So you are going back to Vienna as soon as all that?" asked George.

"A fortnight. Do you think that so soon? At any rate you will be home before us, won't you?"

"Yes, we shall leave in a few days. We can't put it off any longer. Besides, we shall have to break the journey a few times. Anna doesn't stand travelling well."

"Do you know yet that I found the villa for Anna just before I left?" said Therese.

"Really, you? Did you go looking, too?"

"Yes, I went into the country a few times with my mother. It is a small fairly old house in Salmansdorf with a beautiful garden, which leads straight out to the fields and forest, and the bit of ground in front of the house is quite overgrown.... Anna will tell you more about it. I believe it is the last house in the place. Then there comes an inn, but a fair distance away from it."

"I must have overlooked that house on my house-hunting expeditions in the spring."

"Clearly, or you would have taken it. There is a little clay figure standing on a lawn near the garden hedge."

"Can't remember. But do you know, Therese, it is really nice of you to have taken all this trouble for us, as well as your mother. More than nice." He thought of adding "when one takes your strenuous life into consideration," but suppressed it.

"Why are you surprised?" asked Therese. "I am very fond of Anna."

"Do you know what I once heard some one say about you?" replied George after a short pause.

"Well, what?"

"That you would either finish up on the scaffold or as a princess."

"That's a phrase of Doctor Berthold Stauber. He once told it me himself, you know. He is very proud of it, but it is sheer nonsense."

"The betting at present is certainly more on the princess."

"Who says so? The princess dream will soon be over!"

“Dream?”

“Yes, I am just beginning to wake up. It is rather like the morning air streaming into a bedroom.”

“And then I suppose the other dream will begin?”

“What do you mean, the other dream?”

“This is what I take to be the case with you. When you are in the public eye again, making speeches, sacrificing yourself for some cause or other, then at some moment or other the whole thing strikes you like a dream, doesn’t it? And you think real life is somewhere else.”

“There is really something in what you say.”

At this moment Demeter and Anna, who were standing by the garden gate, turned round towards them both and immediately took the broad avenue towards the entrance of the hotel. George and Therese also went on further, unseen outside the railing, into the darkest depths of the shade.

George suddenly seized hold of his companion’s hand. As though astonished she turned towards him and both now stood opposite each other, enveloped by the darkness and closer than they could understand. They did not know how... they scarcely meant to, but their lips rested on each other for a short moment that was more charged with the doleful joy of deception than with any other emotion. They then went on, silent, unsatisfied, desirous, and stepped through the garden door.

The two others, who were in front of the hotel, now turned round and came to meet them.

Therese quickly said to George: “Of course you don’t come with us?”

George nodded slightly. They were now all standing in the broad quiet light of the arc-lamps.

“It was really a beautiful evening,” said Demeter, kissing Anna’s hand.

“Goodbye then till Vienna,” said Therese and embraced Anna.

Demeter turned to George. “I hope we shall see each other to-morrow morning on the boat.”

“Possibly, but I won’t promise.”

“Goodbye,” said Therese and shook hands with George.

She and Demeter then turned round to go away.

“Are you going with them?” asked Anna, as they went through the door into the lounge, where men and women were sitting, smoking, drinking, talking.

“What an idea?” replied George. “I never thought of it.”

“Herr Baron,” suddenly called some one behind him. It was the porter, who held a telegram in his hand.

“What is this?” asked George, somewhat alarmed, opening it quickly. “Oh, how awful!” he exclaimed.

“What is it?” asked Anna.

He read it out while she looked at the piece of paper. “Oskar Ehrenberg tried to commit suicide early this morning in the forest at Neuhaus. Shot himself in the temples, little hope of saving his life, Heinrich.”

Anna shook her head. They went up the stairs in silence and into Anna’s room. The balcony door was wide open. George stepped into the open air. A heavy perfume of magnolias and roses streamed in out of the darkness. Not a trace of the lake was visible. The mountains towered up as though they had grown out of the abyss. Anna came up to George. He laid his arm on her shoulder and loved her very much. It was as though the serious event of which he had just had tidings, had compelled him to realise the true significance of his own experiences. He knew once more that there was nothing more important for him in the whole world than the well-being of this beloved woman who was standing with him on the balcony and who was to bear him a child.

VI



WHEN GEORGE STEPPED on to the summer heat of the pavement out of the cool central restaurant where he had been accustomed to take his meals for some weeks, and started on his way to Heinrich's apartment, his mind was made up to start his trip into the mountains within the next few days. Anna was quite prepared for it, and appreciating that the monotonous life of the last few weeks was beginning to make him feel bored and mentally restless had even herself advised him to go away for a few days.

They had returned to Vienna six weeks ago on a rainy evening and George had taken Anna straight from the station to the villa, where Anna's mother and Frau Golowski had been waiting for the overdue travellers for the last two hours in a large but fairly empty room, with a dilapidated yellowish carpet under the dismal light of a hanging lamp. The door on to the garden verandah stood open. Outside the pattering rain fell on to the wooden floor and the warm odour of moist leaves and grass swept in. George inspected the resources of the house by the light of a candle which Frau Golowski carried in front of him, while Anna reclined exhausted in the corner of the large sofa covered with fancy calico and was only able to give tired answers to her mother's questions. George had soon taken leave of Anna with mingled emotion and relief, stepped with her mother into the carriage which was waiting outside, and while they rode over the dripping streets into the town he had given the embarrassed woman a faithful if forced account of the unimportant events of the last days of their trip. He was at home an hour after midnight, refrained from waking up Felician, who was already asleep, and with an undreamt-of joy stretched himself out in his long-lost bed for his first sleep at home after so many nights.

Since then he had gone out into the country to see Anna nearly every day. If he did not feel tempted to make little trips round the summer resorts in the neighbourhood he could easily get to her in an hour on his cycle. But he more frequently took the horse tram and would then walk through the little villages till he came to the low green painted railings behind which stood the modest country house with its three-cornered wooden gable in the small slightly sloping garden. Frequently he would choose a way which ran above the village between garden and fields and would enjoy climbing up the green slope till he came to a seat on the border of the forest, from which he could get a clear view of the straggling little place lying in the tiny valley. He saw from here straight on to the roof beneath which Anna lived, deliberately allowed his gentle longing for the love who was so near him to grow gradually more and more vivid till he hurried down, opened the tiny door and stepped over the gravel straight through the garden towards the house. Frequently, in the more sultry hours of the afternoon, when Anna was still asleep, he would sit in the covered wooden verandah which ran along the back of the house in a comfortable easy-chair covered with embroidered calico, take out of his pocket a book he had brought with him and read. Then Frau Golowski in her neat simple dark dress would step out of the dark inner room and in her gentle somewhat melancholy voice, with a touch of motherly kindness playing around her mouth, would report to him about Anna's health, particularly whether she had had a good appetite and if she had had a proper walk up and down the garden. When she had finished she always had something to see to in the kitchen or about the house and disappeared. Then while George was going on with his reading a fine St. Bernard dog which belonged to people in the neighbourhood would come out, greet George with serious tearful eyes, allow him to stroke her short-haired skin and lie down gratefully at his feet. Later, when a certain stern whistle which the animal knew well rang out, it would get up with all the clumsiness of its condition, seem to apologise by means of a melancholy look for not being able to stay

longer and slink away. Children laughed and shouted in the garden next door. Now and again an indiarubber ball came over the wall. A pale nursemaid would then appear at the bottom gate and shyly request to have the ball thrown back again. Finally, when it had grown cooler, Anna's face would show itself at the window that opened on to the verandah, her quiet blue eyes would greet George, and soon she would come out herself in a light house-dress. They would then walk up and down the garden along the faded lilac-bushes and the blooming currant-bushes, usually on the left side, which was bounded by the open meadow, and they would take their rest on the white seat close to the top end of the garden, underneath the pear-tree. It was only when supper was served that Frau Golowski would appear again, shyly take her place at the table and tell them if asked all the news about her family; about Therese, who had now gone on to the staff of a Socialist journal; about Leo, who being less occupied by his military duties than before was enthusiastically pursuing his mathematical studies; and about her husband, who while he looked on with resignation from the corner of a smoky café at the chess battles of the indefatigable players, always saw new vistas of regular employment display themselves only to close again immediately. Frau Rosner only paid an occasional visit and usually went away soon after George's appearance. On one occasion, on a Sunday afternoon, the father had come as well and had a conversation with George about the weather and scenery, just as though they had met by chance at the house of a mutual acquaintance who happened to be ill. It was only to humour her parents that Anna kept herself in complete retirement in the villa. For she herself had grown to lose all consciousness of any false position, feeling just as though she had been George's wedded wife, and when the latter, tired of the monotonous evenings, asked her for permission to bring Heinrich along sometimes she had agreeably surprised him by immediately expressing her agreement.

Heinrich was the only one of George's more intimate friends who still remained in town in these oppressive July days. Felician, who had been as affectionate with his brother since his return home as though the comradeship of their boyhood had been kindled afresh, had just taken his diplomatic examination and was staying with Ralph Skelton on the North Sea. Else Ehrenberg, who had spoken to George once soon after his return by her brother's sick-bed in the sanatorium, had been for a long time at Auhof am See with her mother. Oskar too, whom his unfortunate attempt at suicide had cost his right eye, though it was said to have saved him his lieutenant's commission, had left Vienna with a black shade over his blinded eye. Demeter Stanzides, Willy Eissler, Guido Schönstein, Breitner, all were away, and even Nürnberger, who had declared so solemnly that he did not mean to leave the town this year, had suddenly vanished.

George had visited him before any one else after he came back, to bring him some flowers from his sister's grave in Cadenabbia. He had read Nürnberger's novel on his journey. The scene was laid in a period which was now almost past; the same period, so it seemed to George, as that of which old Doctor Stauber had once spoken to him. Nürnberger had thrown a grim light over that sickly world of lies in which adult men passed for mature, old men for experienced, and people who did not offend against any written law for righteous; in which love of freedom, patriotism and humanitarianism passed *ipso facto* for virtue, even though they had grown out of the rotten soil of thoughtlessness or cowardice. He had chosen for the hero of his book a sterling and energetic man who, carried away by the hollow phrases of the period, saw things as they were from the height which he had reached and seized with horror at the realization of his own dizzy ascent, precipitated himself into the void out of which he had come. George was considerably astonished that a man who had created this strong and resounding piece of work should subsequently confine himself to casual cynical comments on the progress of the age, and it was only a phrase of Heinrich's to the effect that wrath but not loathing was fated to be fertile that made him understand why Nürnberger's work had been stopped for ever. The lonely hour in the Cadenabbia cemetery on that dark blue late afternoon had made as strange and deep an

impression upon George as though he had actually known and appreciated the being by whose grave he stood. It had hurt him that the gold lettering on the grey stone should have grown faint and that the beds of turf should have been overgrown with weeds, and after he had plucked a few yellow-blue pansies for his friend he had gone away with genuine emotion. He had cast a glance from the other side of the cemetery door through the open window of the death-chamber, and saw a female body on a bier between high burning candles, covered with a black pall as far as her lips, while the daylight and candlelight ran into one another over its small waxen face.

Nürnberger had not been unmoved by this sympathetic attention on the part of George and on that day they spoke to each other more intimately than they had ever done before.

The house in which Nürnberger lived was in a narrow gloomy street which led out of the centre of the town and mounted in terraces towards the Danube. It was ancient, narrow and high. Nürnberger's apartment was on the fifth and top storey, which was reached by a staircase with numerous turns. In the low though spacious room into which George stepped out of a dark hall stood old but well-preserved furniture, while an odour of camphor and lavender came insistently out of the alcove in the recess in front of which a pale green curtain had been let down. Portraits of Nürnberger's parents in their youth hung on the wall together with brown engravings of landscapes after the Dutch masters. Numerous old photographs in wooden frames stood on the sideboard. Nürnberger fetched a portrait of his dead sister out of a secretary-drawer where it lay beneath some letters that had been yellowed by time. It showed her as a girl of eighteen in a child's costume which seemed to have a kind of historical atmosphere, holding a ball in her hand, and standing in front of a hedge, behind which there towered a background of cliffs. Nürnberger introduced all these unknown faraway and dead persons to his friend to-day by means of their portraits, and spoke of them in a tone which seemed to make the gulf of time between the then and the now both wider and deeper.

George's glance often swept out over the narrow street towards the grey masonry of ancient houses. He saw small cobwebbed panes with all kinds of household utensils behind them. Flower-pots with miserable plants stood on a window-ledge, while fragments of bottles, broken-up barrels, scraps of paper, mouldy vegetables lay in a gutter between two houses, a battered pipe ran down between all this rubbish and disappeared behind a chimney. Other chimneys were visible to right and left, the back of a yellowish stone gable could be seen, towers reared up towards the pale blue heaven and a light grey spire with a broken stone cupola which George knew very well, appeared unexpectedly near. Automatically his eyes tried to find the quarter where he might be able to fix the position of the house in whose entrance the two stone giants bore on their powerful shoulders the armorial bearings of a vanished stock, and in which his child, which was to come into the world in a few weeks, had been begotten.

George gave an account of his trip. He felt the spirit of this hour so deeply that he would have thought himself petty if he had let the matter rest at half-truths. But Nürnberger had known the story, and in its entirety too, long ago, and when George showed a little astonishment at this he smiled mockingly.

"Don't you still remember," he asked, "that morning when we looked over a summer residence in Grinzing?"

"Of course."

"And don't you remember too that a woman with a little child in her arms took us round the house and garden?"

"Yes."

"Before we went away the child held out its arms towards you, and you looked at it with a certain amount of emotion in your expression."

“And that’s what made you conclude that I....”

“Oh well, you know, you’re not the man to go in for thrills over the sight of small children, a bit unwashed, too, into the bargain, if they are not linked on to associations of a personal character.”

“One must beware of you,” said George jestingly, but not without some sense of uneasiness.

The slight irritation, which he always felt again and again at Nürnberger’s superior manner, was far from preventing him from cultivating his society more and more. He frequently fetched him from home to go for walks in the streets and parks, and he felt a sense of satisfaction, a sense in fact of personal triumph, when he managed to draw him from the rarefied regions of bitter wisdom into the gentler fields of affectionate intercourse. George’s walks with him had become such a pleasant habit that he felt as though his daily life had been impoverished when he found one morning that Nürnberger’s apartment was closed. Some days afterwards came a card of apology from Salzburg, which was also signed by a married couple, a manufacturer and his wife, good-natured cheery people, whom George had once got to know slightly through Nürnberger in Graben. According to Heinrich’s malicious description the common friend of this married couple had been dragged down the stairs, of course after a desperate resistance, made to sit down in a carriage and been transported to the station more or less like a prisoner. According to Heinrich, too, Nürnberger had several friends of this innocent kind who felt the need of getting the celebrated cynic to let a few drops of his malice trickle into their palatable cup of life, while Nürnberger on his side liked to recuperate in their free-and-easy society from the strain of his acquaintances in literary and psychological circles.

The meeting with Heinrich had meant a disillusionment to George. After the first words of greeting the author had as usual only spoken about himself, and that, too, in tones of the deepest contempt. He had come at last to the conclusion that he did not really possess any talent but only intelligence, though that of course to an enormous degree. The thing about himself that he cursed the most violently was the lack of harmony in the various phases of his character, which as he well knew not only occasioned suffering to himself but to all who came near him. He was heartless and sentimental, flippant and melancholic, sensitive and callous, an impossible companion and yet drawn towards his fellow-beings... at any rate at times. A person with such characteristics could only justify his existence by producing something immense, and if the masterpiece which he felt obliged to create did not appear on the scene very soon he would feel that as a decent man he would be obliged to shoot himself. But he was not a decent man.... There lay the rub. “Of course you won’t shoot yourself,” thought George, “principally because you haven’t got the pluck to do so.” Of course he did not give expression to this thought but on the contrary was very sympathetic. He talked of the moods to which after all every artist is liable, and inquired kindly about the material conditions of Heinrich’s life. It soon transpired that he wasn’t in such a bad way by any means. He was even leading a life which as it appeared to George was freer from anxiety than it had ever been before. The maintenance of his mother and sisters for the ensuing years had been assured by a small legacy. In spite of all the hostile influences which were at work against him the fame of his name was increasing from day to day. The miserable affair with the actress seemed to be finished once and for all, and a quite new relationship with a young lady which was as free and easy as could possibly be desired, was actually bringing a certain amount of gaiety into his life. Even his work was making good progress. The first act of the opera libretto was as good as ready, and he had made numerous notes for his political comedy. He intended next year to visit the sittings of Parliament and attend meetings, and coquetted with the admittedly childish fantastic plan of posing as a member of the social democratic party, trying to tack himself on to the leaders and getting himself taken on, if he could get the chance, as an active member of some organisation or other, simply so as to get a complete insight into the party machinery. Still, you know, when he had been talking to any one for five minutes on end, why he had

got him absolutely. He would find in some casual word, whose significance would completely escape any one else, a kind of whirlwind which tore the veil from off the souls of men. His dream was to prove himself a master of imagination in his opera poem and a master of realism in his comedy, and thus show the world that he was equally at home both in heaven and on earth. At a subsequent meeting George got him to read as much of the first act of the opera as he had finished. He found the verses very singable and asked Heinrich to allow him to take the manuscript to Anna. Anna could not bring herself to fancy much what George read out to her; but he asserted, though without any real conviction, that what she felt was just the very longing for these verses to be set to music, and that that must necessarily strike her as a weakness.

When George came into Heinrich's room to-day the latter was sitting at the big table in the middle of the room, which was covered over with papers and letters. Written papers of all kinds lay about on the piano and on the ottoman. Heinrich still had a sheet of faded yellow paper in his hand when he got up and hailed George with the words, "Well, how goes the country?"

This was the way in which he was accustomed to inquire after Anna's health, a way which George felt afresh every single time to be unduly familiar.

"Quite well, thanks," he replied. "I have just come to ask you if perhaps you would care to come out there with me to-day."

"Oh yes, I should like to very much. The thing is, though, that I am just in the middle of putting various papers in order. I can't come before the evening about seven or so. Will that suit you?"

"Quite," said George. "But I see I am disturbing you," he added as he pointed to the littered table.

"Not at all," replied Heinrich. "I am only tidying up, as I just told you. They're my father's posthumous papers. Those there are letters to him and here are rough notes more or less like a diary, written for the most part during his parliamentary period. Tragic, I tell you! How that man loved his country! And how did they thank him? You've no idea of the refinement with which they drove him out of his party. A complicated network of intrigue, bigotry, brutality.... Thoroughly German, to put the matter in a nutshell."

George felt a sense of antagonism. "And he dares," he thought, "to hold forth about Anti-Semitism. Is he any better? any juster? Does he forget that I am a German myself...?"

Heinrich went on speaking. "But I will give this man a memorial.... He and no other shall be the hero of my political drama. He is the truly tragi-comic central figure which I have always been wanting."

George's antagonism became intensified. He felt a great desire to protect old Bermann against his son. "A tragi-comic figure," he repeated, almost aggressively.

"Yes," retorted Heinrich unhesitatingly, "a Jew who loves his country.... I mean in the way my father did, with a real feeling of solidarity, with real enthusiasm for the dynasty, is without the slightest question a tragi-comic figure. I mean... he belonged to that Liberalising epoch of the seventies and eighties when even shrewd men were overcome by the catch-words of the age. A man like that to-day would certainly appear merely comic. Yes, even if he had finished up by hanging himself on the first nail he came across I could not regard his fate as anything else."

"It is a mania of yours," replied George. "You really very often give one the impression that you have quite lost the capacity of seeing anything else in the world except the Jewish question, you always see it everywhere. If I were as discourteous as you happen to be at times, I would... you'll forgive me of course, say that you were suffering from persecution-mania."

"Persecution-mania..." replied Heinrich dully, as he looked at the wall. "I see, so you call it persecution-mania, that.... Oh well." And then he continued suddenly with clenched teeth: "I say, George, I want to ask you something on your conscience."

"I'm listening."

He placed himself straight in front of George, and with his eyes pierced his forehead. "Do you think there's a single Christian in the world, even taking the noblest, straightest and truest one you like, one single Christian who has not in some moment or other of spite, temper or rage, made at any rate mentally some contemptuous allusion to the Jewishness of even his best friend, his mistress or his wife, if they were Jews or of Jewish descent?" And without waiting for George's answer: "There isn't one, I assure you. You can try another test also if you like. Read for instance the letters of any celebrated and otherwise perfectly shrewd and excellent man and observe the passages which contain hostile and ironic expressions about his contemporaries. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred it simply deals with an individual without taking any account of his descent or creed. In the hundredth case, where the miserable victim has the misfortune to be a Jew, the writer will certainly not forget to mention that fact. That's just how the thing is, I can't help it. What you choose to call persecution-mania, my dear George, is in reality simply an extremely intense consciousness that has been kept continuously awake of a condition in which we Jews happen to find ourselves. And as for talking about persecution-mania, why it would be much more logical to talk about a mania for being hidden, a mania for being left alone, a mania for being safe; which though perhaps a less sensational form of disease is certainly a much more dangerous one for its victims. My father suffered from it, like many others of his generation. He at any rate made such a radical cure that he went mad in the process."

Deep furrows appeared on Heinrich's forehead and he looked again towards the wall, straight past George, who had sat down on the hard black leather ottoman.

"If that's your way of looking at things," replied George, "why, you have no other logical alternative but to join Leo Golowski...."

"And migrate to Palestine with him. Is that what you think? As a matter of symbolical politics or actually — what?" He laughed. "Have I ever said that I want to get away from here? That I would prefer to live anywhere else except here? Above all, have I ever said that I liked living among Jews? So far as I at any rate am concerned that would be a purely objective solution of an essentially subjective problem."

"I really think so also. And that's why, to tell the truth, I understand less than ever what you want, Heinrich. I had the impression last autumn, when you had your tussle with Golowski on the Sophienalp, that you looked at the matter far more hopefully."

"More hopefully?" repeated Heinrich in an injured tone.

"Yes. One felt bound to think then that you believed in the possibility of a gradual assimilation."

Heinrich contemptuously contracted the corners of his mouth. "Assimilation.... A phrase.... Yes, that'll come all right some time or other... in a very very long time. It won't come at all in the way many want it to — it won't come either in the way many are afraid it will.... Further, it won't be exactly assimilation... but perhaps something that beats in the heart of that particular word so to speak. Do you know what it will probably look like in the end? That we, we Jews I mean, have been a kind of ferment in the brewing of humanity — yes, perhaps that'll come out in anything from one to two thousand years from now. It is a consolation too. Don't you think so?" He laughed again.

"Who knows," said George reflectively, "if you won't be regarded as right — in a thousand years? But till then?"

"Why, my dear George, there won't be anything in the way of a solution of the question before then. In our time there won't be any solution, that's absolutely positive. No universal solution at any rate. It will rather be a case of a million different solutions. For it's just a question which for the time being every one has got to settle for himself as best he can. Every one must manage to find an escape for himself out of his vexation or

out of his despair or out of his loathing, to some place or other where he can breathe again in freedom. Perhaps there are really people who would like to go as far as Jerusalem to find it... I only fear that many of them, once they arrive at their official goal, would then begin to realise that they had made an utter mistake. I don't think for a minute that migrations like that into the open should be gone in for in parties.... For the roads there do not run through the country outside but through our own selves. Every one's life simply depends on whether or not he finds his mental way out. To do that of course it is necessary to see as clearly as possible into oneself, to throw the searchlight into one's most hidden crannies, to have the courage to be what one naturally is — not to be led into a mistake. Yes, that should be the daily prayer of every decent man: to make no mistake."

Where is he getting to again now? thought George. He is quite as morbid in his way as his father was. And at the same time one can't say that he has been personally through bad times. And he has asserted on one occasion that he felt there was no one with whom he had anything in common. It is not a bit true. He feels he has something in common with all Jews and he stands nearer to the meanest of them than he does to me. While these thoughts were running through his mind his glance fell on a big envelope lying on the table, and he read the following words written on it in large Roman capitals: "Don't forget. Never forget."

Heinrich noticed George's look and took the envelope up in his hand. Three strong grey seals could be seen on its back. He then threw it down again on the table, drooped his underlip contemptuously and said: "I've tidied up that business as well, you know, to-day. There are days like this when one goes in for a great cleaning-up. Other people would have burnt the stuff. What's the point? I shall perhaps read it again with pleasure. The anonymous letters I once told you about are in this envelope, you know."

George was silent. Up to the present Heinrich had vouchsafed no information as to the circumstances under which his relations with the actress had come to an end. Only one passage in his letter to Lugano had hinted at the fact that it had not been without a certain deep-felt horror that he had seen his former mistress again. Almost against his own will the following words came out of George's mouth: "You know, of course, the story of Nürnberger's sister who lies buried in Cadenabbia?"

Heinrich answered in the affirmative. "What makes you think of that?"

"I visited her grave a few days before I came back." He hesitated. Heinrich was looking fixedly at him with a violently interrogative expression which compelled George to go on speaking. "Just think now, isn't it strange? since that time those two persons are always associated together in my memory, though I have never seen one of them and have only caught a glimpse of the other one at the theatre — as you know. I mean Nürnberger's dead sister and... this actress."

Heinrich grew pale to his very lips. "Are you superstitious?" he asked scornfully, but it sounded as though he were asking himself.

"Not at all," cried George. "Besides, what has superstition to do with this matter?"

"I'll only tell you that everything that has any connection at all with mysticism goes radically against the grain with me. Lots of twaddle is passed off in the world for science, but talking about things which one can't know anything about, things whose very essence is that one can never know anything about them, is in my view the most intolerable twaddle of the whole lot."

"Can she have died, this actress?" thought George.

Suddenly Heinrich took up the envelope again in his hand, and said in that dry tone which he liked to assume at those very moments when he was most deeply harrowed: "Writing out these words here is childish tomfoolery or affectation if you like. I could also have added the words Daudet put before his Sappho: 'To you, my son, when you are twenty years of age....' Too silly, anyway. As though the experiences of one man

could be the slightest use to another man. The experiences of one man can often be amusing for another, more often bewildering, but never instructive.... And do you know why it is that both those figures are associated in your brain? I'll tell you why. Simply because in one of my letters I employed the expression 'Ghost' with reference to my former mistress. So that clears up this mysterious embroglio."

"That's not impossible," replied George. From somewhere or other came the indistinct sound of bad piano-playing. George looked out. The sun lay on the yellow wall opposite. Many windows were open. A boy sat at one of them, his arms resting on the window-ledge, and read. From another two young girls looked down into the garden courtyard. The clattering of utensils was audible. George longed for the open air, for his seat on the border of the forest. Before he turned to go it occurred to him to say: "I wanted to tell you, Heinrich, that Anna too liked your verses very much. Have you written any more?"

"Not many."

"It would be nice if you brought along to-day all you have done of the libretto and read it to us." He stood by the piano and struck a couple of chords.

"What's that?" asked Heinrich.

"A theme," replied George "that's just occurred to me for the second act. It is meant to accompany the moment in which the remarkable stranger appears on the ship."

Heinrich shut the window, George sat down and started to go on playing. There was a knock at the door, and Heinrich automatically cried: "Come in."

A young lady came in in a light cloth skirt with a red silk blouse and a white velvet ribbon with a little gold cross round her neck. A Florentine hat trimmed with roses shaded with its broad brim the pale little face from which two big black eyes peered out.

"Good afternoon," said the strange lady in a low voice, which sounded at the same time both defiant and embarrassed. "Excuse me, Herr Bermann, I didn't know that you had visitors," and she looked inquisitively at George, who had at once recognised her.

Heinrich grew paler and puckered his forehead. "I certainly had no idea," he began. He then introduced them and said to the lady: "Won't you sit down?"

"Thanks," she answered curtly and remained standing. "Perhaps I'll come again later."

"Please don't," cut in George. "I am just on the point of running off."

He watched the look of the actress roving round the room and felt a strange pity for her, such as one frequently feels in dreams for dead people who do not know that they have died. He then saw Heinrich's glance rest on this pale little face with inconceivable hardness. He now remembered very clearly seeing her on the stage, with the reddish-blonde hair that fell over her forehead and her roving eyes. "That's not how persons look," he thought, "who are fated to belong only to *one* man. And to think of Heinrich, who plumes himself so much on his knowledge of character, never having felt that! What did he really want of her? It was vanity which burnt in his soul, nothing more than vanity."

George walked along the street, which was like a dry oven. The walls of the houses threw back into the air the summer heat which they had absorbed. George took the horse-tram to the hills and woods, and breathed more freely when he was in the country. He walked slowly on between the gardens and villas, then passing the churchyard he took a white road with a gradual incline called Sommerhaidenweg, which he regarded as a good omen, and which was used by practically nobody during this late hour of a sunny afternoon. No shade came from the wooded line of heights on his left, only a gentle purring of breezes which had gone to sleep in the leaves. On the right a green incline sloped downwards towards the long stretch of valley where roofs were gleaming between the boughs and tree-tops. Further down vineyards and tilled fields struggled up behind

garden fences towards meadows and quarries, over which shrubbery and bushes hung in the glittering sun. The path along which George was accustomed to wander was just a thin straight line often lost among the fields, and his eye sought the place on the border of the forest where his favourite seat was situated: meadows and wooded heights at the end of the valley with fresh vales and hills. George felt himself strangely wedded to this landscape and the thought that his own career and his own will called him abroad often wove farewell moods around his lonely walks even now.

But at the same time a presentiment of a richer life stirred within him. It was as though many things were coming to birth in his soul which he had no right to disturb by anxious reflection; and there was a murmur of the melodies of days to come in the lower depths of his soul, though it was not yet vouchsafed to him to hear them clearly. He had not been idle, either, in drafting out clearly the rough plan of his future. He had written a letter of polite thanks to Detmold, in which he placed himself with reservation at the disposition of the manager for the coming autumn. He had also looked up old Professor Viebiger, explained his plans to him and requested him if the opportunity presented itself to remember his former pupil. But even though contrary to his expectations he failed to find a position in the autumn he was determined to leave Vienna, to retire for the time being to a small town or into the country, and to go on working by himself amid the quietness. He had not clearly worked out how his relations to Anna would shape under these circumstances. He only knew that they must never end. He thought vaguely that he and Anna would visit each other and go on journeys together at some convenient time; subsequently no doubt she would move to the place where he lived and worked. But it struck him as useless to go deeply into these matters before the actual hour arrived, since his own life had been definitely decided at any rate for the coming year.

The Sommerhaidenweg ran into the forest, and George took the broad Villenweg, which crossed the valley at this point and curved downwards. In a few minutes he found himself in the street, at the end of which stood the little villa in which Anna lived. It was close to the forest, near unpretentious yellow bungalows and only raised above their level by its attic and balcony with its triangular wooden gable. He crossed the plot of ground in front of the house where the little blue clay angel welcomed him on its square pedestal in the middle of the lawn between the flower-beds, and went through the narrow passage near which the kitchen lay, and the cool middle room on whose floor the rays of the sun were playing through the dilapidated green Venetian blinds and stepped on to the verandah. He turned towards the left and cast a glance through the open window into Anna's room, which he found empty. He then went into the garden and walking along the lilac and currant-bushes towards the bottom, soon saw Anna some way off, sitting on the white seat under the pear-tree in her loose blue dress. She did not see him coming, but seemed quite plunged in thought. He slowly approached. She still did not look up. He loved her very much at moments like this when she thought she was unobserved and the goodness and peacefulness of her character floated serenely around her clear forehead. The grasshoppers chirruped on the gravel at their feet. Opposite them on the grass the strange St. Bernard dog lay sleeping. It was the animal which first noticed George's arrival as it woke up. It got up and jogged clumsily towards George. Anna now looked up and a happy smile swept over her features. Why am I so seldom here? was the thought which ran through George's mind. Why don't I live out here and work on top on the balcony under the gable, which has a beautiful view on to the Sommerhaidenweg? His forehead had grown damp, for the late afternoon sun was still blazing.

He stood in front of Anna, kissed her on the eyes and mouth and sat down at her side. The animal had slunk after him and stretched itself out at his feet. "How are you, my darling?" he asked, while he put his arm around her neck.

She was very well, as usual, and to-day was a particularly fine day. She had been left quite to herself since

the morning, for Frau Golowski had to go to town again to look after her family. It was really not so bad to be so completely alone with oneself. One could sink then into one's dreams undisturbed. They were of course always the same, but they were so sweet that one did not get tired of them. She had let herself dream about her child. How much she loved it to-day, even before it was born! She would never have considered it possible. Did George understand it too?... And as he nodded absent-mindedly she shook her head. No, no... a man could not understand that, even the very best and kindest man. Why, she could feel the little being already moving, could detect the beating of its tender heart, could feel this new incomprehensible soul breathe within her, just in the same way as she felt the flowering and awakening within her of its fresh young body. And George looked in front of him as though ashamed that she was facing the near future. It was true of course that a being would exist, begotten by himself, like himself and itself destined again to give life to new beings; it was true that within the blessed body of that woman, for which he had ceased for a long time now to feel any desire, there was swelling, according to the eternal laws, a life that only a year ago had been undreamt-of, unwished-for, lost in infinity, but which now was forcing its way up to the light like something predestined from time immemorial; it was true that he knew that he was irresistibly drawn into that forged chain that stretched from primal ancestor to future descendant and which he grasped as it were with both hands... but he did not feel that this miracle made so potent an appeal to him as it really ought.

And they spoke to-day more seriously than usual about what was to happen after the child's birth. Anna, of course, would keep it with her during the first week, but then they would have to give it to strangers; but at any rate it should live quite near, so that Anna could see it at any time without any difficulty.

"I say, dear," she said quite lightly and suddenly, "will you often come and visit us?"

He looked into her arch smiling face, took both her hands and kissed her. "Dearest, what am I to do? Tell me yourself. You can imagine how hard it will be for me. But what else is there for me to do? I've got to make a beginning. I've already told you we've given notice to leave the apartment," he added hastily, as though that cut off all retreat. "Felician is probably going to Athens. Yes, it would of course be fine if I could take you with me. But I am afraid that isn't possible. There ought above all to be something more or less certain, I mean one ought — ought at least to be certain that I shall remain in the same place for a longish time."

She had listened with quiet seriousness. She then started to speak about her latest idea. He must not believe, she said, that she was thinking of putting the whole burden of responsibility upon him. She was determined as soon as it was feasible to found a music-school. If he left her alone for a long time the school would be here in Vienna. If he soon came to fetch her it would be wherever she and he had their home. And when she was once in an independent position she meant to take and keep her child whether she was his wife or not. She was very far from being ashamed of it, he knew that quite well. She was rather proud... yes, proud of being a mother.

He took her hands in his and stroked them. It would all come right enough, he said, feeling somewhat depressed. He suddenly saw himself sitting at supper between wife and child, beneath the modest light of a hanging lamp in an extremely simple home. And this family scene of his imagination wafted towards him, as it were, an atmosphere of troubled boredom. Come, it was still too early for that, he was still too young. Was it possible, then, that she was to be the last woman whom he was to embrace? Of course it might come in years, even in months, but not to-day. As for bringing lies and deceit into a well-ordered home, he had a horror of the idea. Yet the thought of rushing away from her to others whom he desired, with the consciousness that he would find Anna again just as he had left her, was at once tempting and reassuring.

The well-known whistle was heard from outside. The dog got up, made George stroke her yellow-spotted

back once again and sadly slunk away.

"By Jove," said George, "I had almost forgotten all about it. Heinrich will be here any minute." He told Anna about his visit and did not suppress the fact that he had made the acquaintance of the faithless actress.

"Did she succeed then?" exclaimed Anna, who did not fancy ladies with roving eyes.

"I don't think that she succeeded at all," replied George. "Heinrich was rather annoyed at her turning up, so far as I could see."

"Well, perhaps he'll bring her along too," said Anna jestingly, "then you will have some one to flirt with again, as you did with the regicide at Lugano."

"Upon my word," said George innocently, and then added casually: "But what's the matter with Therese? why doesn't she come to see you any more? Demeter is no longer in Vienna. She would have plenty of time."

"She was here only a few days ago. Why, I told you so. Don't pretend."

"I'd really forgotten it," he answered honestly. "What did she tell you then?"

"All there was to tell. The Demeter affair is over. Her heart is throbbing once more only for the poor and the miserable — until it is called back." And Anna confided Therese's winter plans to him under the seal of a most rigid silence. Disguised as a poor woman she meant to undertake expeditions through shelters, soup- and tea-kitchens, refuges for the homeless and workmen's dwellings, with a view to shedding a light into the most hidden corners for the benefit of the so-called golden heart of Vienna. She seemed quite ready for it and was perhaps a little sanguine of discovering some horrors.

George looked in front of him. He remembered the stylish lady in the white dress who had stood in the sunshine in Lugano in front of the post-office, far from all the cares of the world. "Strange creature," he thought.

"Of course she'll make a book out of it," said Anna. "But mind you don't tell any one, not even your friend Bermann."

"Shouldn't think of it! But I say, Anna, hadn't you better get something ready for this evening?"

She nodded. "Come, take me downstairs. I'll see what there is and consult Marie too... so far as is possible to do so."

They got up. The shadows had lengthened. The children were making a noise in the next garden. Anna took her lover's arm and walked slowly with him. She told him the newest instances of the fantastic stupidity of the maid.

The idea of my being a husband, thought George, and listened reflectively. When they got to the house he announced his intention of going to meet Heinrich, left Anna and went into the street.

At this precise moment a one-horse carriage jogged up. Heinrich got out and paid the driver. "Hallo!" he said to George, "have you really waited for me after all? It's not so late then?"

"Not at all. You're very punctual. We'll go for a short walk if it suits you."

"Delighted."

They walked on into the forest past the yellow inn with the red terraces.

"It is wonderful here," said Heinrich, "and your villa too looks awfully nice. Why don't you live out here?"

"Yes, it's absurd not to," agreed George without further explanation. Then they were silent for a while.

Heinrich was in a light grey summer suit and carried his cloak over his arm, letting it trail a little behind him. "Did you recognise her again?" he asked suddenly, without looking up.

"Yes," replied George.

"She only came up for one day from her summer engagement. She goes back by train to-night. A surprise

attack, so to speak. But it didn't come off." He laughed.

"Why are you so hard?" asked George, and thought of the big envelope with the grey seals and the silly inscription. "There is really no occasion for you to be so. It is only a fluke that she did not get anonymous letters just like you did, Heinrich. And who knows, if you hadn't left her alone for God knows what reasons...."

Heinrich shook his head and looked at George almost as though he pitied him. "Do you mean by any chance that it is my intention to punish her or avenge myself? Or do you think I'm one of those mugs who don't know what to make of the world because something has happened to them which they know has already happened to thousands before them and will happen to thousands after them? Do you think I despise the 'faithless woman' or that I hate her? Not a bit of it. Of course I don't mean to say that I don't at times assume the pose of hatred and contempt, only of course to produce better results upon her. But as a matter of fact I understand all that has happened far too well for me to...." He shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, if you do understand it?..."

"But, my dear friend, understanding a thing is no earthly good at all. Understanding is a game like anything else. A very 'classy' game and a very expensive one. One can spend one's whole soul over it and finish up a poor devil. But understanding hasn't got the least thing in the world to do with our feelings, almost as little as it has to do with our actions. It doesn't protect us from suffering, from revulsion, from ruin. It leads absolutely nowhere. It's a kind of *cul-de-sac*. Understanding always signifies the end."

As they walked slowly and silently up a side path with a moderate incline, each one engrossed in his own thoughts, they emerged out of the woods into open meadowland, which gave a clear view of the valley. They looked out over the town and then further on towards the haze-breathing plain through which the river ran shining; they looked towards the far line of the mountains, over which a thin haze was spreading. Then in the peace of the evening sun they walked on further towards George's favourite seat on the border of the forest. The sun was not visible. George watched the track of the Sommerhaidenweg on the other side of the valley run along the wooded hills; it looked pale and cooled. He then looked down and knew that in the garden at his feet there was a pear-tree, beneath which he had sat a few hours before with some one who was very dear to him, and who carried his child under her bosom, and he felt moved. He felt a slight contempt for the women who were perhaps waiting for him somewhere, but that did not extinguish his desire for them. Summer visitors were walking about down below on the path between the garden and the meadows. A young girl looked up and whispered something to another.

"You are certainly a popular personality in the place here," remarked Heinrich, contracting the corners of his mouth ironically.

"Not that I know of."

"Those pretty girls looked at you with great interest. People always find an inexhaustible source of excitement in other people not being married. Those holiday-makers down there are bound to look upon you as a kind of Don Juan and... your friend as a seduced maiden who has gone wrong, don't you think so?"

"I don't know," said George, anxious to cut short the conversation.

"And I wonder what I represented," continued Heinrich unperturbed, "to the theatrical people in the little town. Clearly the deceived lover. Consequently an absolutely ridiculous character. And she? Well, one can imagine. Things are awfully simple for lookers-on. But when one gets to close quarters everything looks utterly different. But the question is whether the complexion it has in the distance isn't the right one? Whether one does not persuade oneself into believing a lot of rot, if one's got a part to play in the comedy oneself?"

He might quite as well have stayed at home, thought George. But as he could not send him home, and with

the object at any rate of changing the conversation, he asked him quickly: “Do you hear anything from the Ehrenbergs?”

“I had a rather sad letter from Fräulein Else a few days ago,” replied Heinrich.

“You correspond with her?”

“No, I don’t correspond with her. At any rate I have not yet answered her.”

“She is taking the Oskar business much more to heart than she will own,” said George. “I spoke to her once in the nursing-home. We remained standing quite a time outside in the passage in front of the white varnished door behind which poor Oskar was lying. At that time they were afraid of the other eye as well. It’s really a tragic affair.”

“Tragi-comic,” corrected Heinrich with hardness.

“You see the tragi-comic in everything. I’ll tell you why, too. Because you’re more or less callous. But in this case the comic element takes a back seat.”

“You make a mistake,” replied Heinrich. “Old Ehrenberg’s box on the ear was a piece of crudeness, Oskar’s suicide a piece of stupidity, his making such a bad shot at himself a piece of bungling. These elements certainly can’t produce anything really tragic. It is a rather disgusting business, that’s all.”

George shook his head angrily. He had felt genuine sympathy for Oskar since his misfortune. He was also sorry for old Ehrenberg, who had been staying in Neuhaus since then, was only living for his work and refused to see any one. They had both paid their penalty, which was heavier than they had deserved. Couldn’t Heinrich see that and feel it just as he did? They really got on one’s nerves at times, these people, with their exaggerated Jewish smartness and their relentless psychology — these Bermanns and Nürnbergers. Their principal object in life was to be surprised by nothing whatsoever. What they lacked was kindness. It was only when they grew older that a certain gentleness came over them. George thought of old Doctor Stauber, of Frau Golowski, of old Eissler, but so long as they were young... they always kept on the *qui vive*. Their one ideal was not to be scored off! A disagreeable lot. He felt more and more that he missed Felician and Skelton, who as a matter of fact were really quite clever enough. He even missed Guido Schönstein.

“But in spite of all her melancholy,” said Heinrich after a time, “Fräulein Else seems to be having a pretty good time of it. They are having people down again at Auhof. The Wyners were there the other day, Sissy and James. James got his doctor’s degree the other day at Cambridge. Classy, eh?”

The word Sissy darted through George’s heart like a flashing dagger. He realised it all of a sudden. He would be with her in a few days. His desire surged up so strongly that he himself scarcely understood it.

The dusk came down. George and Heinrich got up, went down the fields and entered the garden. They saw Anna come down the centre path accompanied by a gentleman.

“Old Doctor Stauber,” said George. “You know him, I suppose?”

They exchanged greetings.

“I am very glad,” said Anna to Heinrich, “that you should come and see us at last.”

“Us!” repeated George to himself, with a sense of surprise which he immediately repudiated. He went in front with Doctor Stauber. Heinrich and Anna slowly followed.

“Are you satisfied with Anna?” George asked the doctor.

“Things couldn’t be going on better,” replied Stauber, “only she must continue to take exercise regularly and properly.”

It struck George, who had not seen the doctor before since his return, that he had not yet given him back the books which he had borrowed and he made his apologies.

“There’s time enough for that,” replied Stauber. “I am only too glad if they came in handy.” And he asked

what impressions he had brought home from Rome.

George told him of his wanderings through the old imperial palaces, of his drives through the Campagna in the evening light, of a sultry hour in Hadrian's garden just before a storm. Doctor Stauber begged him to stop, otherwise he might be induced to leave all his patients here in the lurch so as to run away at once to the city he loved so much. Then George made polite inquiries after Doctor Berthold. Was there any foundation for the rumour that he would be engaged again in active political life in the approaching winter?

Doctor Stauber shrugged his shoulders. "He comes back in September, that's the only thing certain so far. He has been very industrious at Pasteur's and he wants to elaborate at the pathological institute here a great piece of serum research work which he began in Paris. If he takes my advice he'll stick to it, for in my humble opinion what he is now doing is much more important for humanity than the most glorious revolution. Of course talents vary, and I've certainly nothing to say against revolutions now and again. But speaking between ourselves, my son's talent is far more on the scientific side. It's rather his temperament which drives him in the other direction... perhaps only his temper. Well, we shall see. But how about your plans for the autumn?" he added suddenly, as he looked at George with his good-natured fatherly expression. "Where are you going to swing your bâton?"

"I only wish I knew myself," replied George.

Doctor Stauber was walking by his side, his lids half closed and his cigar in his mouth, and while George told him about his efforts and his prospects with self-important emphasis he thought he felt that Doctor Stauber simply regarded everything he said as nothing more than an attempted justification of his putting off his marriage with Anna. A slight irritation against her arose within him; she seemed to be standing behind them and perhaps was enjoying quietly that he was, as it were, being cross-examined by Doctor Stauber.

He deliberately assumed a lighter and lighter tone, as though his own personal plans for the future had nothing at all to do with Anna, and finished up by saying merrily: "Why, who knows where I shall be this time next year? I may finish up in America."

"You might do worse," replied Doctor Stauber quietly. "I have a cousin who is a violinist in Boston, a man named Schwarz, who earns there at least six times as much as he gets here at the opera."

George did not like being compared with violinists of the name of Schwarz and asserted with an emphasis which he himself thought rather exaggerated that it was not at all a question of money-making, at any rate at the beginning. Suddenly, he did not know where the thought came from, the idea ran through his mind: "Supposing Anna dies.... Supposing the child were her death...." He felt deeply shocked, as though he had committed a crime by the very thought, and he saw in his imagination Anna lying there with the shroud drawn over her chin and he saw the candlelight and daylight streaming over her wax-pale face. He turned round almost anxiously, as though to assure himself that she was there and alive. The features of her face were blurred in the darkness and this frightened him. He remained standing with the doctor till Anna arrived with Heinrich. He was happy to have her so near him. "You must be quite tired now, dear," he said to her in his tenderest tone.

"I've certainly honestly performed my day's work," she replied. "Besides," and she pointed to the verandah, where the lamp with the green paper shade was standing on the laid table, "supper will soon be ready. It would be so nice, Doctor, if you could stay; won't you?"

"I'm afraid it's impossible, my dear child. I ought to have been back in town ages ago. Remember me kindly to Frau Golowski. See you again soon. Good-bye, Herr Bermann. Come," he added, "is one going to get another chance soon of seeing or reading one of your fine pieces of work?"

Heinrich shrugged his shoulders, vouchsafed a social smile and was silent. Why, he thought, are even the

best-bred men usually tactless when they meet people like myself? Do I ask him about his affairs?

The doctor went on to express in a few words his sympathy with Heinrich over old Bermann's death. He remembered the dead man's celebrated speech in opposition to the introduction of Tschech as the judicial language in certain Bohemian districts. At that time the Jewish provincial advocate had come within an ace of being Minister of Justice. Yes, times had changed.

Heinrich started to listen. After all this could be made use of in the political comedy.

Doctor Stauber took his leave. George accompanied him to the carriage which was waiting outside, and availed himself of the opportunity to ask the doctor some medical questions. The latter was able to reassure him in every respect.

"It's only a pity," he continued, "that circumstances do not allow Anna to nurse the child herself."

George stood still meditatively. It could not hurt her, could it?... At any rate, only the child? Or her as well?... He asked the doctor.

"Why talk about it, my dear Baron, if it's not practicable? That's all right, don't you worry," he added, with one foot already in the carriage. "One needn't be nervous about the child of people like you two."

George looked him straight in the eye and said: "I will at any rate take care that he lives the first years of his life in healthy air."

"That's very nice," said Doctor Stauber gently. "But speaking generally there is no healthier air in the world for children than their parents' home."

He shook hands with George and the carriage rolled away.

George remained standing for a moment and felt a lively irritation against the doctor. He vowed mentally that he would never allow the conversation with him to take a turn that would as it were entitle him to give unsolicited advice or make veiled reproaches. What did the old man know? What did he really understand about the whole thing? George's antagonism became more and more violent. When I choose to, he said to himself, I will marry her. Can't she have the child with her anyway? Hasn't she said herself that she will be proud of having a child? I am not going to repudiate it either, and I will do everything in my power. And later on sometime.... But I should be doing an injustice to myself, to her, to the child if I were to make up my mind to-day to do something which at any rate is still premature.

He had slowly walked past the short side of the house into the garden. He saw Anna and Heinrich sitting on the verandah. Marie was just coming out of the house, very red in the face, and putting a warm dish on the table, from which the steam mounted up. How quiet Anna sits there, thought George, and remained standing in the darkness. How serene, how free from care, as though she could trust me implicitly, as though there were no such things as death, poverty, treacherous desertion, as though I loved her as much as she deserves. And again he felt alarmed. Do I love her less? Is she not right in trusting me? When I sit over there on my seat on the edge of the forest so much tenderness often wells up in me that I can scarcely stand it. Why do I feel so little of that now? He was standing only a few paces away and watched her first carve and then stare into the darkness out of which he was to come, while her eyes began to shine as he stepped suddenly into the light. My one true love, he thought.

When he sat down by the others Anna said to him: "You've had a very long consultation with the doctor."

"It wasn't a consultation. We were chatting. He also told me about his son who is coming back soon."

Heinrich inquired after Berthold. The young man interested him and he hoped very much to make his acquaintance next winter. His speech last year on the Therese Golowski case, together with his open letter to his constituents, in which he had explained the reasons for his resignation, yes, they had been really first-class performances.... Yes, and more than that — documents of the period.

A light almost proud smile flew over Anna's face. She looked down to her place and then quickly up to George. George also was smiling. Not a trace of jealousy stirred within him. Did Berthold have any idea...? Of course. Did he suffer?... Probably. Could he forgive Anna? To think of having to forgive at all! What nonsense.

A dish of mushrooms was served. On its appearance Heinrich could not refrain from asking if it were at all poisonous.

George laughed.

"You needn't make fun of me," said Heinrich. "If I wanted to kill myself I wouldn't choose either poisoned mushrooms or decayed sausage, but a nobler and swifter poison. At times one is sick of life, but one is never sick of health, even in one's last quarter of an hour. And besides, nervousness is a perfectly legitimate, though usually shamefully repudiated, daughter of reason. What does nervousness really mean? considering all the possibilities that may result from an action, the bad and good ones equally. And what is courage? I mean, of course, real courage, which is manifested far more rarely than one thinks. For the courage which is affected or the result of obedience or simply a matter of suggestion doesn't count. True courage is often really nothing else than the expression of an as it were metaphysical conviction of one's own superfluity."

"Oh, you Jew!" thought George, though without malice, and then said to himself, "Perhaps he isn't so far out after all."

They found the beer so good, although Anna did not drink any, that they sent Marie to the inn for a second jugful. Their mood became genial. George described his trip again. The days at Lugano in the broiling sun, the journey over the snowy Brenner, the wandering through the roofless city, which after a night of two thousand years had surged up again to the light; he conjured up again the minute in which they had been present, he and Anna, when workmen were carefully and laboriously excavating a pillar out of the ashes. Heinrich had not yet seen Italy. He meant to go there next spring. He explained that he was frequently torn by a desire for, if not exactly Italy, at any rate foreign lands, distance, the world. When he heard people talking about travels he often got heart palpitation like a child the evening before its birthday. He doubted whether he was destined to end his life in his home. It might be, perhaps, that after wandering about for years on end he would come back and find in a little house in the country the peace of his later manhood. Who knew — life was so full of coincidences — if he were not destined to finish his life in this very house in which he was now a guest and felt better than he had for a long time?

Anna thanked him with an air which indicated that she was not merely the hostess of the country house but of the whole world itself with its evening calm.

A soft light began to shine out of the darkness of the garden. A warm moist odour came from the grass and flowers. The long fields which ran down to the railing swept into view in the moonlight and the white seat under the pear-tree shimmered as though very far away. Anna complimented Heinrich on the verses in the opera libretto which George had read to her the other day.

"Quite right," remarked George, smoking a cigar with his legs comfortably crossed, "have you brought us anything fresh?"

Heinrich shook his head. "No, nothing."

"What a pity!" said Anna, and suggested that Heinrich should tell them the plot consecutively and in detail. She had been wanting to know about it for a long time. She was unable to get any clear idea of it from George's account.

They looked at each other. There came up in their minds that sweet dark hour when they had lain in peace

with breast close to breast in a dark room in front of whose windows, behind its floating curtain of snow, a grey church had loomed, and into which the notes of an organ had boomed heavily. Yes, they now knew where the house stood in which the child was to come into the world. Perhaps another house, too, thought George, stands somewhere or other in which the child that has not yet been born will end its life. Death! As a man — or as an old man, or.... Oh, what an idea, away with it... away with it!

Heinrich declared his readiness to fulfil Anna's wish, and stood up. "I shall perhaps find it useful myself," he said apologetically.

"But mind you don't suddenly switch off into your political tragi-comedy," remarked George. And then, turning to Anna: "He's writing a piece, you know, with a National German corps student for its hero who poisons himself with mushrooms through despair of emancipation of the Jews."

Heinrich nodded dissent. "One glass of beer less and you'd never have made that epigram."

"Jealousy!" replied George. He felt extraordinarily pleased with life, particularly now that he had firmly made up his mind to leave the day after to-morrow. He sat quite close to Anna, held her hand in his and seemed to hear the melody of future days singing in the deepest recesses of his soul.

Heinrich had suddenly gone into the garden outside the verandah, reached over the railing, took his cloak from the chair and threw it romantically around him. "I'm going to begin," he said. "Act I."

"First, an overture in D. minor," interrupted George. He whistled an impressive melody, then a few notes and finished with an "and so on."

"The curtain rises," said Heinrich. "Feast in the King's garden. Night. The princess is to be married to the Duke Heliodorus next day. I call him Heliodorus for the time being, he will probably have another name though. The king adores his daughter and can't stand Heliodorus, who is a kind of popinjay with the tastes of a mad Cæsar. The king has really given the feast to annoy Heliodorus, and not only are all the nobles in the land invited but the youth of all classes, in so far as they have won a right to be invited by their beauty. And on this evening the princess is to dance with any one who pleases her. And there is some one in particular, his name is Ägidius, with whom she seems quite infatuated. And no one is more pleased about it than the king. Jealousy on the part of Heliodorus. Increased pleasure on the part of the king. Scene between Heliodorus and the king. Scorn. Enmity. Then something highly unexpected takes place. Ägidius draws his dagger against the king. He wants to murder him. The motives for this attempted murder of course would have to be very carefully worked in if you had not been kind enough, my dear George, to set the thing to music! So it will be enough to hint that the youth hates tyrants, is a member of a secret society, is perhaps a fool or a hero off his own bat. I don't know yet, you see. The attempted murder fails. Ägidius is arrested. The king wishes to be left alone with him. Duet. The youth is proud, self-possessed, great. The king superior, cruel, inscrutable. That's about my idea of him. He had already sent many men to their death and already seen many die, but his own inner consciousness is so awfully vivid and intense that all other men seem to him to be living in a state of mere semi-consciousness, so that their death has practically no other significance except the step from twilight into gloom. A death like that strikes him as too gentle or too banal for a case like this. He wishes to plunge this youth from a daylight such as no mortal has yet enjoyed into the most dreadful darkness. Yes, that's how his mind works. How much he says or sings about this I don't yet know of course. Ägidius is taken away just like a prisoner condemned, so everybody thinks, to immediate death, and on the very same ship, too, as that on which Heliodorus was to have started on his journey with the princess in the evening. The curtain falls. The second act takes place on the deck. The ship under weigh. Chorus. Isolated figures come up. Their significance is only revealed later. Dawn. Ägidius is led up from the hold below. To his death, as he is bound, of course, to think. But it turns out otherwise. His fetters are loosed. All bow down to him. He is

hailed as a prince. The sun rises. Ägidius has an opportunity of noticing that he is in the very best society — beautiful women, nobles. A sage, a singer, a fool, are intended for important parts. But who should come out of the chorus of women but the princess herself; she belongs absolutely to Ägidius, like everything else on the ship."

"What a splendid father and king!" said George.

"No price is too dear for him to pay!" explained Heinrich, "for a really ingenious idea. That's his line. There follows a splendid duet between Ägidius and the princess. Then they sit down to the meal. After the meal dancing. High spirits. Ägidius naturally thinks he has been saved. He is not inordinately surprised, because his hatred for the king was always to a great extent inspired by admiration. The twilight begins to loom. Suddenly a stranger is at Ägidius' side. Perhaps he has been there for a long time, one among the many, unnoticed, mute. He has a word to say to Ägidius. The feasting and dancing proceed meanwhile. Ägidius and the stranger. 'All this is yours,' says the stranger. 'You can rule according to your humour. You can take possession and kill just as you wish. But to-morrow... or in two or seven years or in one year or in ten, or still later, this ship will approach an island on whose shore a marble hall towers aloft upon a cliff. And there death waits for you — death. Your murderer is with you on the ship. But only the one whose mission it is to be your murderer knows it. Nobody else knows who he is. Nay, nobody else on this ship has any inkling that you are consecrated to death. Remember that. For when you let any one notice that you yourself know your fate you are doomed to death that very hour.'"

Heinrich spoke these words with exaggerated pathos, as though to conceal his embarrassment. He went on more simply. "The stranger vanishes. Perhaps I shall have him disembarked on the mainland by two silent attendants who have accompanied him. Ägidius remains among the hundreds of men and women of which one or the other is his murderer. Which one? The sage or the fool? The star-gazer yonder? One of those yonder, ruminating in the darkness? Those men stealing up the steps yonder? One of the dancers? The princess herself? She comes up to him again, is very tender, nay, passionate. Hypocrite? Murderess? His love? Does she know? At any rate she is his. All this is to be his to-day. Night on the sea. Terror. Delight. The ship goes slowly on towards that shore that lies hours or years away in the distance of the far-off mist. The princess is nestling at his feet. Ägidius stares into the night and watches." Heinrich stopped as though personally affected.

Melodies rang in George's ear. He heard the music for the scene when the stranger disappears escorted by the mutes, and then gradually the noise of the feast comes to the front of the stage. He did not feel it within him as a mere melody, but he already felt it with all its fulness of instruments. Were there not flutes sounding and oboes and clarionets? Was not the 'cello singing and the violin? Was not a faint beat of a drum droning out of a corner of the orchestra? Involuntarily he held up his right arm, as though he had his conductor's bâton in his hand.

"And the third act?" asked Anna, as Heinrich remained silent.

"The third act," repeated Heinrich, and there was a touch of depression in his voice. "The scene of the third act, of course, will be laid in that hall on the cliff — don't you think so? It must, I think, begin with a dialogue between the king and the stranger. Or with a chorus? There are no choruses on uninhabited islands. Anyway, the king is there and the ship is in sight. But look here, why should the island be uninhabited?" He stopped.

"Well?" asked George impatiently.

Heinrich laid both his arms on the railing of the verandah. "I'll tell you something. This isn't an opera at all...."

"What do you mean?"

"There are very good reasons for my not getting as far as this part of it. It is a tragedy clearly. I just haven't got the courage to write it. Do you know what would have to be described? The inner change in Ägidius would have to be described. That is clearly both the difficulty and the beauty of the subject-matter. In other words it is a thing which I daren't do. The opera idea is simply a way of getting out of it, and I don't know if I ought to take on anything like that." He was silent.

"But at any rate," said Anna, "you must tell us the end of the opera as you have got it in your mind. I must really admit that I'm quite excited."

Heinrich shrugged his shoulders and answered in a tired voice: "Well, the ship hoves to. Ägidius lands. He is to be hurled into the sea."

"By whom?" asked Anna.

"I've no idea at all," replied Heinrich unhappily. "From this point my mind is an absolute blank."

"I thought it would be the princess," said Anna, and waving her hand through the air executed a death signal.

Heinrich smiled gently. "I thought of that, of course, also, but...." He broke off and suddenly looked up to the night sky in a state of nervous tension.

"It was to finish with a kind of pardon, so far as your original draft went," remarked George irritably. "But that, of course, is only good enough for an opera. But now, as your Ägidius is the hero of a tragedy, of course he will have to be really hurled into the sea."

Heinrich raised his forefinger mysteriously and his features became animated again. "I think something is just dawning upon me. But don't let's talk about it for the time being, if you don't mind. It's perhaps really been a sound thing that I told you the beginning."

"But if you think that I am going to do *entr'acte* music for you," said George, without particular emphasis, "you are under a delusion."

Heinrich smiled, guiltily, indifferently and yet quite good-humouredly. Anna felt with concern that the whole business had fizzled out. George was uncertain whether he ought to be irritated at his hopes being disappointed or be glad at being relieved of a kind of obligation. But Heinrich felt as though the creations of his own mind were deserting him in shadowy confusion, mockingly, without farewell and without promising to come again.

He found himself alone and deserted in a melancholy garden, in the society of quite a nice man whom he knew very well, and a young lady who meant nothing at all to him. He could not help thinking all of a sudden of a person who was travelling at this very hour in a badly-lighted compartment in despair and with eyes red with crying, towards dark mountains, worrying whether she would get there in time to-morrow for her rehearsal. He now felt again that since that had come to an end he was going downhill, for he had nothing left, he had no one left. The suffering of that wretched person, the victim of his own agonizing hatred, was the only thing in the world. And who knew? She might be smiling at another the very next day, with those tearful eyes of hers, with her grief and longing still in her soul and a new *joie de vivre* already in her blood.

Frau Golowski appeared on the verandah. She was flurried and somewhat late, and still carried her umbrella and had her hat on. Therese sent her remembrances from town and wanted to arrange to come and see Anna again the next day or so.

George, who was leaning up against a wooden pillar of the verandah, turned to Frau Golowski with that studious politeness which he always ostentatiously assumed when talking to her. "Won't you ask Fräulein Therese in both our names if she wouldn't care to stay out here for a day or two? The top room is quite at her service. I'm on the point of going into the mountains for a short time, you know," he added, as though he

regularly slept in the little room at all other times.

Frau Golowski expressed her thanks. She would tell Therese. George looked at his watch and saw that it was time to start for home. He and Heinrich then said good-bye. Anna accompanied both of them as far as the garden door, remained standing a little while and watched them till they got on to the height where the Sommerhaidenweg began.

The little village at the bottom of the valley flowed past them in the moonlight. The hills loomed pale like thin walls. The forest breathed darkness. In the distance thousands of lights glittered out of the night mist of the summer town. Heinrich and George walked by each other in silence and a sense of estrangement arose between them. George remembered that walk in the Prater in the previous autumn, when their first almost confidential talk had brought them near to each other. How many talks had they not had since? But had they not all, as it were, gone into thin air? And to-day, too, George was unable to walk through the night with Heinrich without exchanging a word, as he used to do many a time with Guido or with Labinski without feeling any loss of real sympathy. The silence became a strain. He began to talk of old Stauber, as that was the first subject to occur to him, and praised his reliability and versatility. Heinrich was not very taken with him and thought him somewhat intoxicated with the sense of his own kindness, wisdom and excellence. That was another kind of Jew which he could not stand — the self-complacent kind. The conversation then turned on young Stauber, whose vacillation between politics and science had something extremely attractive about it for Heinrich. From that they turned into a conversation about the composition of parliament, about the squabbles between the Germans and the Tschechs and the attacks of the Clericals on the Minister of Education. They talked with that strained assiduousness with which one is accustomed to talk about things which are absolutely indifferent to one in one's heart of hearts. Finally they discussed the question whether the Minister ought to remain in office or not after the dubious figure he had cut over the civil marriage question, and had the vaguest ideas after they had finished as to which of them had been in favour of his resignation and which of them against it. They walked along the churchyard. Crosses and gravestones towered over the walls and floated in the moonlight. The path inclined downwards to the main road. They both hurried so as to catch the last tram, and standing on the platform in the sultry scented night air drove towards the town. George explained that he thought of doing the first part of his tour on his cycle. Obeying a sudden impulse, he asked Heinrich if he wouldn't like to join him. Heinrich agreed and after a few minutes manifested great keenness. They got out at the Schottentor, found out a neighbouring café and after an exhaustive consultation managed, with the help of special maps which they found in encyclopædias, to decide on every possible route. When they left each other their plan was not indeed quite definite, but they already knew that they would leave Vienna early, the day after the next, and would mount their cycles at Lambach.

George stood quite a long time by the open window of his bedroom. He felt intensely awake. He thought of Anna, from whom he was to part to-morrow for a few days, and visualised her as sleeping at this hour out there in the country in the pale twilight between the moonlight and the morning. But he felt dully as though this image had nothing at all to do with his own fate, but with the fate of some unknown man, who himself knew nothing about it. And he was absolutely unable to realise that within that slumbering being there slept another being in still deeper mystery, and that this other being was to be his own child. Now that the sober mood of the early dawn stole almost painfully through his senses the whole episode seemed more remote and improbable than it had ever been before. A clearer and clearer light showed above the roofs of the town, but it would be a long time before the town woke up. The air was perfectly motionless. No breeze came from the trees in the park opposite, no perfume from the withered flower-beds. And George stood by the window; unhappy and without comprehension.

VII



GEORGE SLOWLY CLIMBED up from the hold on narrow carpeted steps between long oblique mirrors and wrapped in a long dark green rug which trailed behind him, wandered up and down on the empty deck beneath the starry sky. Motionless as ever, Labinski stood in the stern and turned the wheel, while his gaze was directed towards the open sea. "What a career!" thought George. "First a dead man, then a minister, then a little boy with a muff and now a steersman. If he knew that I were on this ship he would certainly hail me." "Look out!" cried behind George the two blue girls, whom he had met on the sea-shore, but he rushed on, wrapped himself in his rug and listened to the flapping of white gulls over his head. Immediately afterwards he was in the saloon, down below, sitting at the table, which was so long that the people at the end were quite small. A gentleman near him, who looked like the elder Grillparzer, remarked irritably: "This boat's always late. We ought to have been in Boston a long time ago." George then felt very nervous; for if he could not show the three music scores in the green cover when he disembarked, he would certainly be arrested for high treason. That was why the prince who had been rushing all over the deck with the wheel all day long often cast such strange side-glances at him. And to intensify his suspicions still more he was compelled to sit at table in his shirtsleeves while all the other gentlemen wore generals' uniforms, as they always did on boats, and all the ladies wore red velvet dresses. "We shall soon be in America," said a raucous steward who was serving asparagus. "Only one more station."

"The others can sit there quietly," thought George. "They have nothing to do, but I must swim to the theatre straight away." The coast appeared opposite him in the great mirror; nothing but houses without roofs, whose tiers of terraces towered higher and higher, and the orchestra was waiting impatiently up above in a quiet kiosk with a broken stone cupola. The bell on the deck pealed and George tumbled down the steps into the park with his green rug and two pocket handkerchiefs. But they had shipped the wrong one across; it was the Stadtpark, as a matter of fact; Felician was sitting on a seat, an old lady in a cloak close to him put her fingers on her lips, whistled very loudly and Felician said, with an unusually deep voice: "Kemmelbach — Ybs." "No," thought George, "Felician never uses a word like that..." rubbed his eyes and woke up.

The train was just starting again. Two red lamps were shining in front of the closed window of the compartment. The night ran past, silent and black. George drew his travelling rug closer round him and stared at the green shaded lamp in the ceiling. "What a good thing that I'm alone in the compartment," he thought. "I have been sound asleep for at least four or five hours. What a strange confused dream that was!" The white gulls first came back into his memory. Did they have any significance? Then he thought of the old woman in the cloak, who of course was no other than Frau Oberberger. The lady would not feel particularly flattered. But really, hadn't she looked quite like an old lady, when he had seen her a few days ago by the side of her beaming husband in the box of the little red-and-white theatre of the watering-place? And Labinski, too, had appeared to him in his dream as a steersman, strangely enough. And the girls in blue dresses, also, who had looked out of the hotel garden into the piano room through the window as soon as they heard him playing. But what was the really ghostly element in that dream?

Not the girls in blue, not even Labinski, and not the Prince of Guastalla, who had rushed like mad to the wheel over the deck. No, it was his own figure which had appeared to him so ghostly as it had slunk along by his side multiplied a hundred times over in the long oblique mirrors on both sides. He began to feel cold. The cool night air penetrated into the compartment through the ventilator in the ceiling. The deep black darkness

outside gradually changed into a heavy grey and there suddenly rang in George's ears in a sad whisper the words he had heard only a few hours ago in a woman's low voice: How soon will it take you to forget me?... He did not wish to hear those words. He wished they had already become true, and in desperation he plunged back into the memory of his dream. It was quite clear that the steamer on which he had gone to America on his concert tour really meant the ship on which Ägidius had sailed towards his sinister fate. And the kiosk with the orchestra was the hall where Ägidius had waited for death. The starry sky which spread over the sea had been really wonderful. The air had been bluer and the stars more silvery than he had ever seen them in waking life, even on the night when he had sailed with Grace from Palermo to Naples. Suddenly the voice of the woman he loved rang through the darkness again, whispering and mournful: "How long will it take you to forget me?"... And he now visualised her as he had seen her a few hours ago, pale and naked, with her dark hair streaming over the pillows. He did not want to think of it, conjured up other images from the depths of his memory and deliberately chased them past him. He saw himself going round a cemetery in the thawing February snow with Grace; he saw himself riding with Marianne over a white country road towards the wintry forest. He saw himself walking with his father over the Ringstrasse in the late evening; and finally a merry-go-round whirled past him. Sissy with her laughing lips and eyes was rocking about on a brown wooden horse. Else, graceful and ladylike, was sitting in a little red carriage, and Anna rode an Arab with the reins nonchalantly in her hand. Anna! How young and graceful she looked! Was that really the same being whom he was to see again in a few hours? and had he really only been away from her for ten days? And was he ever to see again all that he had left ten days ago? The little angel in blue clay between the flower-beds, the verandah with the wooden gable, the silent garden with the currant- and the lilac-bushes? It all seemed absolutely inconceivable. She will wait for me on the white seat under the pear-tree, he thought, and I will kiss her hands as though nothing had happened.

"How are you, George dear?" she will ask me. "Have you been true to me?" No.... That's not her way of asking, but she will feel without asking at all or my answering that I have not come back the same as I went away. If she only does feel it! If I am only saved from having to lie! But haven't I done so already? And he thought of the letters which he had written from the lake, letters full of tenderness and yearning, which had really been nothing but lies. And he thought of how he had waited at night with a beating heart, his ear glued to the door, till all was quiet in the inn; of how he had then stolen over the passage to that other woman who lay there pale and naked, with her dark eyes wide open, enveloped in the perfume and bluish shimmer of her hair. And he thought of how he and she one night, half drunken with desire and audacity, had stepped out on to the verandah, beneath which the water plashed so seductively. If any one had been out on the lake in the deep darkness of this hour he would have seen their white bodies shining through the night. George thrilled at the memory. We were out of our senses, he thought; how easily it might have happened that I should be lying to-day with a bullet through my heart six feet under the ground. Of course there's still a chance of it. They all know. Else knew first, though she scarcely ever came down from Auhof into the village. James Wyner, who saw me with the other woman one evening standing on the landing-stage is bound to have told her. Will Else marry him? I can understand her liking him so much. He is handsome, that chiselled face, those cold grey eyes which look shrewd and straight into the world, a young Englishman. Who knows if he wouldn't have turned into a kind of Oskar Ehrenberg in Vienna? And George remembered what Else had told him about her brother. He had struck George as so self-possessed, almost mature in fact, on his sick-bed in the nursing-home. And now he was said to be leading a wild life in Ostend, to be gambling and gadding about with the most evil associates, as though he wanted to go thoroughly to the dogs. Did Heinrich still find the matter so tragi-comic? Frau Ehrenberg had grown quite white with grief. And Else had cried her eyes out in front of

George one morning in the grounds; but had she only been crying about Oskar?

The grey in front of the compartment window slowly cleared. George watched the telegraph wires outside sweeping and shifting across each other with swift movements and he thought of how, yesterday afternoon, his own lying words to Anna had travelled across one of these wires: “Shall be with you early to-morrow morning. Fondest love, your own George.”... He had hurried back straight from the post-office to an ardent and desperate final hour with the other woman, and he could not realise that even at this very minute, when he had already been away from her for a whole eternity, she should still be lying asleep and dreaming in that same room with the fast-closed windows. And she will be home this evening with her husband and children. Home — just as he would be. He knew that it was so and he could not understand it. For the first time in his life he had been near doing something which people would probably have had to call madness. Only one word from her... and he would have gone out with her into the world, have left everything behind, friends, mistress and his unborn child. And was he not still ready to do so? If she called him would he not go? And if he did do so would he not be right? Was he not far more cut out for adventures of that kind than for the quiet life full of responsibilities which he had chosen for himself? Was it not rather his real line to career boldly and unhesitatingly about the world than to be stuck somewhere or other with his wife and child, with all the bothers about bread-and-butter, his career and at the best a little fame? In the days from which he had just come he had felt that he was living, perhaps for the first time. Each moment had been so rich and so full, and not only those spent in her arms. He had suddenly grown young again. The country had flowered with a greater splendour, the arc of the sky had grown wider, the air which he drank had exhaled a finer spice and strength, and melodies had rippled within him as never before. Had he ever composed anything better than that wordless song to be sung on the water with its sprightly rocking melody? And that fantasy had risen strangely by the shore of the lake one hour out of depths of his which he had never dreamt of, after he had seen the wondrous woman for the first time. Well, Herr Hofrat Wilt would no longer have occasion to regard him as a dilettante. But why did he think of him of all people? Did the others know what kind of a man he was any better? Didn’t it often seem to him as though even Heinrich, who had once wanted to write an opera libretto for him, had failed to judge him any more accurately? And he heard again the words which the author had spoken to him that morning when they had cycled from Lambach to Gmunden through the dew-wet forest. “You need not do creative work in order to realise yourself... you do not need work... only the atmosphere of your art....” He suddenly remembered an evening in the keeper’s lodge on the Alamsee when a huntsman of seventy-three had sung some jolly songs and Heinrich had wondered at any one of that age being still so jolly, since one would be bound to feel oneself so near one’s death. Then they had gone to bed in an enormous room which echoed all their words, philosophised about life and death for a long time, and suddenly fallen asleep.

George was still motionless as he lay stretched out in his rug and considered whether he should tell Heinrich anything about his meeting with his actress. How pale she had grown when she had suddenly seen him. She had listened, with roving eyes, to his account of the cycle tour with Heinrich and then begun to tell him straight away about her mother and her little brother who could draw so wonderfully finely. And the other members of the company had kept staring all the time from the stage door, particularly a man with a green tyrol hat, in which a chamois’ beard was stuck. And George had seen her play the same evening in a French farce, and asked himself if the pretty young person who acted and pranced about so wildly down on the stage of the little holiday theatre could really be so desperate as Heinrich imagined. Not only he but James and Sissy as well had liked her very much. What a jolly evening it had been! And the supper after the theatre with James, Sissy, old mother Wyner and Willy Eissler! And next day the ride in the four-in-hand of old

Baron Löwenstein, who drove himself. In less than an hour they had reached the lake. A boat was rowing near the bank in the early sunshine. And the woman he loved sat on the rowing-seat with a green silk shawl over her shoulders. But how was it that Sissy also had divined the relationship between him and her? And then the merry dinner at the Ehrenbergs' up at Auhof! George sat between Else and Sissy, and Willy told one funny story after the other. And then on the afternoon, George and Sissy had found each other without any rendezvous in the dark green sultriness of the park amid the warm scent of the moss and the pines, while all the others were resting. It had been a wonderful hour, which had floated through this day as lightly as a dream, without vows of troth and without fear of fulfilment. How I like thinking every single minute of it all over again, savouring it to the full, that golden day! I see both of us, Sissy and myself, going down over the fields to the tennis-court, hand in hand. I think I played better than I ever did in my life.... And I see Sissy again lounging in a cane chair, with a cigarette between her lips and old Baron Löwenstein at her side, while her looks flamed towards Willy. What had become of me at that moment, so far as she was concerned? And the evening! How we swam out in the twilight into the lake, while the warm water caressed me so deliciously. What a delight that was! And then the night... the night....

The train stopped again. It was already quite light outside. George lay still, as before. He heard the name of the station called out; the voices of waiters, conductors and travellers; heard steps on the platform, station-signals of all kinds, and he knew that in an hour he would be in Vienna.... Supposing Anna had received information about him, just as Heinrich had about his mistress the previous winter? He could not imagine that a thing like that could make Anna lose control of herself, even if she believed in it. Perhaps she would cry, but certainly only to herself, quite quietly. He resolved firmly not to let her notice anything. Was not that his plain duty? What was the important thing now? Only this, that Anna should spend the last weeks quietly and without excitement, and that a healthy child should come into the world. That was all that mattered. How long had it been since he had heard Doctor Stauber say those words? The child...! How near the hour was, the child.... He thought again; but he could think of nothing except the mere word. He then endeavoured to imagine a tiny living being. But as though to mock him figures of small children kept appearing, who looked as though they had stepped out of a picture-book, drawn grotesquely and in crude colours. Where will it spend its first years? he thought. With peasants in the country, in a house with a little garden. But one day we will fetch it and take it home with us. It might, too, turn out differently. One gets a letter like this: Your Excellency, I have the honour to inform you that the child is seriously ill.... Or.... What is the point of thinking about things like that? Even though we kept it with us it might fall ill and die.

Anyway, it must be given to people who are highly responsible. I'll see about it myself.... He felt as though he were confronted with new duties which he had never properly considered and which he had not yet grown able to cope with. The whole business was beginning, as it were, over again. He came out of a world in which he had not bothered about all these things, where other laws had prevailed than those to which he must now submit.

And had it not been as though the other people, too, had felt that he was not really one of them, as though they had been steeped in a kind of respect, as though they had been seized by a feeling of veneration for the power and holiness of a great passion, whose sway they witnessed in their own neighbourhood? He remembered an evening on which the hotel visitors had disappeared from the piano-room one after another, as though they had been conscious of their duty to leave him alone with her. He had sat down at the piano and begun to improvise. She had remained in her dark corner in a big arm-chair. First of all he had seen her smile, then the dark shining of her eyes, then only the lines of her figure, then nothing more at all. But he had been conscious the whole time "She is there!" Lights flashed out on the other bank opposite. The two girls in the

blue dresses had peered in through the window and had quickly disappeared again. Then he stopped playing and remained sitting by the pianoforte in silence. Then she had come slowly out of the corner like a shadow and had put her hand upon his head. How ineffably beautiful that had been! And it all came into his mind again. How they had rested in the boat in the middle of the lake, with shipped oars, while his head was in her lap! And they had walked through the forest paths on the opposite bank until they came to the seat under the oak. It had been there that he had told her everything — everything as though to a friend. And she had understood him, as never another woman had understood him before. Was it not she whom he had always been seeking? she who was at once mistress and comrade, with a serious outlook upon everything in the world, and yet made for every madness and for every bliss? And the farewell yesterday.... The dark brilliance of her eyes, the blue-black stream of her loosened hair, the perfume of her white naked body.... Was it really possible that this was over for ever? that all this was never, never to come again?

George crumpled the rug between his fingers in his helpless longing and shut his eyes. He no longer saw the softly moving lines of the wooded hills, which swept by in the morning light, and as though for one last happiness he dreamed himself back again into the dark ecstasies of that farewell hour. Yet against his will he was overcome by fatigue after the jar and racket of the night in the train, and he was swept away out of the images which he had himself called up, in a route of wild dreams which it was not vouchsafed him to control. He walked over the Sommerhaidenweg in a strange twilight that filled him with a deep sadness. Was it morning? Was it evening? Or just a dull day? Or was it the mysterious light of some star over the world that had not yet shone for any one except him? He suddenly stood upon a great open meadow where Heinrich Bermann ran up and down and asked him: Are you also looking for the lady's castle? I have been expecting you for a long time. They went up a spiral staircase, Heinrich in front, so that George could only see a tail of the overcoat which trailed behind. Above, on an enormous terrace which gave a view of the town and the lake, the whole party was assembled. Leo had started his dissertation on minor harmonies, stopped when George appeared, came down from his desk and himself escorted him to a vacant chair which was in the first row and next to Anna. Anna smiled ecstatically when George appeared. She looked young and brilliant in a splendid *décolletée* evening dress. Just behind her sat a little boy with fair hair, in a sailor suit with a broad white collar, and Anna said "That's he." George made her a sign to be silent, for it was supposed to be a secret. In the meanwhile Leo played the *C sharp minor* Nocturne by Chopin in order to prove his theory, and behind him old Bösendorfer leaned against the wall in his yellow overcoat, tall, gaunt and good-natured. They all left the concert-room in a great crush. Then George put Anna's opera cloak round her shoulders and looked sternly at the people round him. He then sat in the carriage with her, kissed her, experienced a great delight in doing so and thought: "If it could only be like this always." Suddenly they stopped in front of the house in Mariahilf. There were already many pupils waiting upstairs by the window and beckoning. Anna got out, said good-bye to George with an arch expression and vanished behind the door, which slammed behind her.

"Excuse me, sir. Ten minutes more," some one said. George turned round. The conductor stood in the doorway and repeated: "We shall be in Vienna in ten minutes."

"Thank you," said George and got up, with a more or less confused head. He opened the window and was glad it was fine weather outside in the world. The fresh morning air quite cheered him up. Yellow walls, signal-boxes, little gardens, telegraph poles, streets, flew past him, and finally the train stood in the station. A few minutes later George was driving in an open fiacre to his apartment, saw workmen, shop girls and clerks going to their daily callings; heard the rattle of rolling shutters and in spite of all the anxiety which awaited him, in spite of all the desire which drew him elsewhere, he experienced the deep joy of once more being at

home.

When he went into his room he felt quite hidden. The old secretary, covered with green baize, the malachite letter-weight, the glass ash-tray with its burnt-in cavalier, the slim lamp with the broad green thick glass shade, the portrait of his father and mother in the narrow mahogany frames, the round little marble table in the corner with its silver case for cigars, the Prince of the Electorate, after Vandyck on the wall, the high bookcase with its olive-coloured curtains; they all gave him a hearty greeting. And how it did one good to have that good home look over the tree tops in the park, towards the spires and roofs. An almost undreamt-of happiness streamed towards him from everything which he found again here, and he felt sore at heart that he would have to leave it all in a few weeks. And how long would it last until one had a home, a real home? He would have liked to have stopped for a few hours in his beloved room but he had no time. He had to be in the country before noon.

He had thrown off his clothes and let the warm water swirl round him deliciously in his white bath. To avoid going to sleep in his bath he chose a means he had often employed before. He rehearsed in his mind note by note a fugue of Bach's. He thought of a pianoforte that would have to be diligently practised and music scores which would have to be read. Wouldn't it really be more sensible to devote another year to study? Not to enter into negotiations straight away or to take a post, which he would turn out to be unable to fill? Rather to stay here and work. Stay here? But where? Notice had been given. It occurred to him for a moment to take the apartment in the old house opposite the grey church, where he had spent such beautiful hours with Anna, and it was as though he were remembering a long-past episode, an adventure of his youth, gay and yet a little mysterious, that had been over long ago....

He went back into his room, refreshed and wearing a brand-new suit, the first light one which he had put on since his father's death. A letter lay on the secretary which had just arrived by the first post, from Anna. He read it. It was only a few words: "You are here again, my love — I welcome you. I do long to see you. Don't keep me waiting too long. Your Anna...."

George got up. He did not himself know what it was in the short letter that touched him so strangely. Anna's letters had always retained, in spite of all their tenderness, a certain precise, almost conventional element, and he had frequently jokingly called them "proclamations." This was couched in a tone that reminded him of the passionate girl of by-gone days, of that love of his whom he had almost forgotten, and a strangely unexpected anxiety seized on his heart. He rushed downstairs, took the nearest fiacre and drove to the country. He soon felt agreeably distracted by the sight of the people in the streets who meant nothing to him at all; and later, when he was near the wood, he felt soothed by the charm of the blue summer day. Suddenly, sooner than George had anticipated, the vehicle stopped in front of the country house. Involuntarily George first looked up to the balcony under the gable. A little table was standing there with a white cover and a little basket on it. Oh yes, Therese had been staying here for a few days. He now remembered for the first time. Therese...! Where was it now? He got out, paid the carriage and went into the front garden where the blue angel stood on its unpretentious pedestal amid the faded flower-beds. He stepped into the house. Marie was just laying the table in the large centre room. "Madam's over there in the garden," she said.

The verandah door was open. The planks of its floor creaked underneath George's feet. The garden with its perfume and its sultriness received him. It was the old garden. During all the days in which George had been far away it had lain there silently, just as it was lying at this minute; in the dawn, in the sunshine, in the twilight, in the darkness of night; always the same.... The gravel path cut straight through the field to the heights. There were children's voices on the other side of the bushes from which red berries were hanging. And over there on the white seat, with her elbow on its arm, very pale, in her flowing blue morning dress, yes,

that was Anna. Yes, really she. She had seen him now. She tried to get up. He saw it, and saw at the same time that she found it difficult. But why? Was she spell-bound by excitement? Or was the hour of trial so near? He signed to her with his hand that she was to remain seated, and she really did sit down again, and only just stretched out her arms lightly towards him. Her eyes were shining with bliss. George walked very quickly, with his grey felt hat in his hand, and now he was at her side.

"At last," she said, and it was a voice which came from as far back as those words in her letter of this morning. He took her hands, shook them in a strange clumsy way, felt a lump in his throat, but was still unable to articulate anything and just nodded and smiled. And suddenly he knelt before her on the grass, with her hands in his and his head in her lap. He felt her lightly taking her hands away, and putting them on his head; and then he heard himself crying quite softly. And he felt as though he were in a sweet vague dream, a little boy again and lying at his mother's feet, and this moment were already a mere memory, painful and far away, even while he was living it.

VIII

FRAU GOLOWSKI CAME out of the house. George could see her from the top end of the garden as she stepped on to the verandah. He hurried excitedly towards her, but as soon as she saw him in the distance she shook her head.

"Not yet?" asked George.

"The Professor thinks," replied Frau Golowski, "some time before dark."

"Some time before dark," said George and looked at his watch. And now it was only three.

She held out her hand sympathetically and George looked into her kind eyes, which were somewhat tired by her nocturnal vigils. The white transparent curtain in front of Anna's window had just been slightly drawn back. Old Doctor Stauber appeared by the window, threw George a friendly reassuring glance, disappeared again and the curtains were drawn. Frau Rosner was sitting in the large centre room by the round table. George could only see from the verandah the outlines of her figure; her face was quite in the shade. Then a whimpering and then a loud groan forced their way from the room in which Anna lay. George stared up at the window, stood still for a while, then turned round and walked for the hundredth time to-day up the path to the top of the garden. It is clear that she is already too weak to shriek, he thought; and his heart pained him. She had lain in labour for two whole days and two whole nights. The third day was now approaching its end, — and now it was still to last until evening came. On the evening of the first day Doctor Stauber had called in the Professor, who had been there twice yesterday and had remained in the house since noon to-day. While Anna had gone to sleep for a few minutes, and the nurse was watching by her bed, he had walked up and down in the garden with George and had endeavoured to explain to him all the peculiar features of the case. For the time being there was no ground for anxiety. They could hear the child's heart beating quite clearly. The Professor was a still fairly young man with a long blonde beard, and his words trickled gently and kindly like drops of some anodyne drug. He spoke to the sick woman like a child, stroked her over the hair and forehead, caressed her hands and gave her pet names. George had learned from the nurse that this young doctor exhibited the same devotion and same patience at every sick-bed. What a profession! thought George, who had once, during these three bad days, fled to Vienna for a few hours, which enabled a man to have a sound dreamless sleep for six good hours up there in the attic this very night while Anna was writhing in pain.

He walked along by the faded lilac-bushes, tore off leaves, crunched them in his hand and threw them on the ground. A lady in a black-and-white striped morning dress was walking in the next garden on the other side of the low bushes. She looked at George seriously and almost sympathetically. Quite so! thought George. Of course she heard Anna's screams the day before yesterday, yesterday and to-day. The whole place in fact knew of what was happening there; even the young girls in the *outré* Gothic villa, who had once taken him for the interesting seducer; and there was real humour in the fact that a strange gentleman with a reddish pointed beard, who lived two houses away, should have suddenly greeted him yesterday in the village with respectful understanding.

Remarkable, thought George, how one can make oneself popular with people. But Frau Rosner let it be seen that even though she did not regard George as mainly responsible for the seriousness of the position she certainly regarded him as somewhat callous. He did not bear any grudge for this against the poor good woman. She could not of course have any idea how much he loved Anna. It was not long since he had known it himself. She had not addressed any question to him on that morning of his arrival when George had lifted

his head off her lap after a long silent fit of weeping, but he had read in the painful surprise of her eyes that she guessed the truth, and he thought he understood why she did not question him. She must realise how completely she possessed him again, how henceforth he belonged to her more than he had ever done before, and when he told her in the subsequent hours and days of the time which he had spent far away from her, and that now fateful name resounded casually but yet insistently out of the catalogue of the women whom he had met, she smiled, no doubt, in her slightly mocking way, but scarcely differently than when he spoke of Else or Sissy, or the little girls in their blue dresses who had peeped into the music-room when he was playing.

He had been living in the villa for two weeks, had been feeling well and in good form for serious work. He spread out every morning on the little table, where Therese's needlework had lain a short time ago, scores, works on musical theory, musical writing-paper, and occupied himself with solving problems in harmony and counterpoint. He often lay down in the meadow by the edge of the forest and read some favourite book or other, let melodies ring within him, indulged in day-dreams and was quite happy, with the rustling of the trees and the brilliance of the sun. In the afternoon, when Anna was resting, he would read aloud or talk to her. They often talked with affectionate anticipation about the little creature that was soon to come into the world, but never about their own future, whether distant or immediate. But when he sat by her bed, or walked up and down the garden with her arm-in-arm, or sat by her side on the white seat under the pear-tree, where the shining stillness of the late summer day rested above them, he knew they were tied fast to each other for all time, and that even the temporary separation with which they were faced could have no power to affect them in view of the certain feeling that they were all in all to each other.

It was only since the pains had come upon her that she seemed removed from him to a sphere where he could not follow her. Yesterday he had sat by her bed for hours and had held her hand in his. She had been patient, as always, had anxiously inquired if he were quite comfortable in the house, had begged him to work and go for walks as he had done before, since after all he could not help her, and had assured him that since she was suffering she loved him even more. And yet she was not the same, George felt, as she had been during these days. Particularly when she screamed out — as she had this morning in her worst pains — her soul was so far away from him that he felt frightened.

He was near the house again. No noise came from Anna's room, in front of the window of which the curtains moved slightly. Old Doctor Stauber was standing on the verandah. George hastened towards him with a dry throat. "What is it?" he asked hastily.

Doctor Stauber put his hand on his shoulder. "Going on nicely."

A groan came from within, grew louder, grew into a wild frenzied scream. George passed his hand over his damp forehead and said to the doctor with a bitter smile: "Is that what you mean by going on nicely?"

Stauber shrugged his shoulders. "It is written, 'With pain shalt thou....'"

George felt a certain sense of resentment. He had never believed in the God of the childishly pious, who was supposed to reveal himself as the fulfiller of the wishes of wretched men and women, as the avenger and forgiver of miserable human sins. The Nameless One which he felt in the infinite beyond his senses, and transcending all understanding, could only regard prayer and blasphemy as poor words out of a human mouth. Not even when his mother had died, after the senseless martyrdom of her suffering, not even when his father had died, passing away painlessly so far as he could understand, had he presumed to indulge in the belief that his own personal misfortunes in the world's progress signified more than the falling of a leaf. He had not bowed down in cowardly humility to any inscrutable solution of the riddle, nor had he foolishly murmured against an ungracious power of whose decrees he was the personal victim.

To-day he felt for the first time as though somewhere or other in the clouds an incomprehensible game was

being played in which his own fortunes were the stakes. The scream within had died away and only groans were audible.

"And the beating of the heart?" asked George.

Doctor Stauber looked at him. "It could still be heard clearly ten minutes ago."

George fought against a dreadful thought which had been hounded up out of the depths of his soul. He was healthy, she was healthy, two strong young people.... Could anything like that be really possible?

Doctor Stauber put his hand on his shoulder again. "Go for a walk," he said. "We'll call you as soon as it's time." And he turned away.

George remained standing on the verandah for another minute. He saw Frau Rosner sitting huddled up in solitary brooding on the sofa near the wall in the large room that was beginning to grow dim in the shade of the late afternoon. He went away, walked round the house and went up the wooden stairs into his attic. He threw himself on the bed and shut his eyes. After a few minutes he got up, walked up and down in the room, but gave up doing so as the floor creaked. He went on to the balcony. The score of *Tristan* lay open on the table. George looked at the music. It was the prelude to the third act. The music rang in his ears. The sea waves were beating heavily on a cliff shore, and out of the mournful distance rang the sad melody of an English horn. He looked over the pages far away into the silver-white brilliance of the daylight. There was sunshine everywhere — on the roofs, paths, gardens, hills and forests. The sky was spread out in its azure vastness and the smell of the harvest floated up from the depths. How were things with me a year ago? thought George. I was in Vienna, quite alone. I had not an idea. I had sent her a song... '*Deinem Blick mich zu bequemen*'... but I scarcely gave her a thought... and now she lies down there dying.... He gave a violent start. He had meant to say mentally... "She is lying in labour," and the words "lies dying" had as it were stolen their way on to his lips. But why was he so frightened? How childish! As though there existed presentiments like that! And if there really were danger, and the doctors had to decide, then of course they would have to save the mother. Why, Doctor Stauber had only explained that to him a few days ago. What, after all, is a child that hasn't yet lived? Nothing. He had begotten it at some moment or other without having wished it, without having even thought of the possibility that he might have become a father. How did he know either that in that dark hour of ecstasy, behind closed blinds a few weeks ago he had not... also become a father without having wished it, without having even thought of the possibility; and perhaps it might have happened without his ever knowing!

He heard voices and looked down; the Professor's coachman had caught hold of the arm of the housemaid, who was only slightly resisting. Perhaps the foundations are being laid here too of a new human life, thought George, and turned away in disgust. Then he went back into his room, carefully filled his cigarette-case out of the box that stood on the table, and it suddenly seemed to him that his excitement was baseless and even childish, and it occurred to him: "My mother, too, once lay like that before I came into the world, just as Anna is doing now. I wonder if my father walked about as nervously as I am doing? I wonder if he would be here now if he were still alive? I wonder if I would have told him at all? I wonder if all this would have happened if he had lived?" He thought of the beautiful serene summer days by the Veldeser Lake. His comfortable room in his father's villa swept up in his memory and in some vague way, almost dreamwise, the bare attic with the creaking floor in which he now found himself seemed to typify his whole present existence in contrast to that former life which had been so free from care and responsibility. He remembered a serious talk about the future which he had had a few days ago with Felician. Immediately after this thought there came into his mind the conversation which he had had with a woman in the country, who had introduced herself with the offer to take charge of the child. She and her husband possessed a small property near the

railway, only an hour away from Vienna, and her only daughter had died in the previous year. She had promised that the little one should be well looked after, as well, in fact, as though it were not a stranger's at all, and as George thought of this he suddenly felt as though his heart were standing still. It will be there before dark.... The child.... His child, but a strange woman was waiting somewhere to take it away with her. He was so tired after the excitement of the last few days that his knees hurt him. He remembered having previously felt similar physical sensations, the evening after his "leaving-examination" and the time when he had learnt of Labinski's suicide. How different, how joyful, how full of hope had been his mood three days ago, just before the pains began! He now felt nothing except an unparalleled dejection, while he found the musty smell of the attic more and more unpleasant. He lit a cigarette and stepped on to the balcony again. The warm silent air did him good. The sunshine still lay on the Sommerhaidenweg and a gilded cross shone over the walls from the direction of the churchyard.

He heard a noise beneath him. Steps? Yes, steps and voices too. He left the balcony and the room and rushed down over the creaking wooden staircase. A door opened, steps were hurrying over the floor. The next moment he was on the bottom step opposite Frau Golowski. His heart stood still. He opened his mouth without asking.

"Yes," she nodded, "a boy."

He gripped both her hands and felt, while he was beaming all over, a stream of happiness was running through his soul with a potency and intense warmth that he had never anticipated. He suddenly noticed that Frau Golowski's eyes were not shining as brightly as they certainly ought to have. The stream of happiness within him ebbed back. Something choked his throat. "Well?" he said. Then he added, almost menacingly: "Does it live?"

"It just breathed once.... The Professor hopes...."

George pushed the woman on one side, reached the great centre room in three strides and stood still as though spell-bound. The Professor, in a long white linen apron, held a small creature in his arms and rocked it hurriedly to and fro. George stood still. The Professor nodded to him and went on undisturbed with what he was doing. He was examining the little creature in his arms with scrutinising eyes, he put it on the table, over which a white linen cloth had been spread, made the child's limbs execute violent exercises, rubbed its breast and face, then lifted it high up several times in succession, and George always saw how the child's head drooped heavily on to its breast. Then the doctor put it on to the linen cloth, listened with his ear on its bosom, got up, put one hand on its little body and motioned gently with the other to George to approach.

Involuntarily holding his breath George came quite near him. He looked first at the doctor and then at the little creature which lay on the white linen. It had its eyes quite open, strangely big blue eyes, like those of Anna. The face looked quite different from what George had expected, not wrinkled and ugly like that of an old dwarf, no; it was really a human face, a silent beautiful child-face, and George knew that these features were the image of his own.

The Professor said gently: "I've not heard its heart beat for the last hour."

George nodded. Then he asked hoarsely: "How is she?"

"Quite well, but you mustn't go in yet, Herr Baron."

"No," replied George and shook his head. He stared at the immobile little body with its bluish shimmer and knew that he was standing in front of the corpse of his own child. Nevertheless he looked at the doctor again and asked: "Can nothing more be done?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

George breathed deeply and pointed to the closed bedroom door. "Does she know yet — —" He asked the

doctor.

"Not yet. Let's be thankful for the time being that it is over. She has gone through a lot, poor girl. I only regret that it should turn out to have been for nothing."

"You expected it, Herr Professor?"

"I feared it since this morning."

"And why... why?"

The doctor answered softly and gently: "A very exceptional case, as I told you before."

"You told me...?"

"Yes, I tried to explain to you that this possibility... it was strangled, you see, by the umbilical cord. Scarcely one or two per cent. of births end like that." He was silent.

George gazed at the child. Quite right, the Professor had prepared him in advance only he had not taken it seriously. Frau Rosner was standing by him with helpless eyes. George held out his hand to her and they looked at each other like persons whom the sore stress of circumstances has made companions in misfortune. Then Frau Rosner sank down on a chair by the wall.

The Professor said to George: "I will now go and just have a look at the mother."

"Mother!" repeated George, and gazed at him.

The doctor looked away.

"You will tell her?" asked George.

"No, not at once. Anyway, she will be ready for it. She asked several times in the course of the day if it was still alive. It will not have so dreadful an effect upon her as you fear, Herr Baron... at any rate during the first hours, the first days. You mustn't forget what she has gone through."

He pressed George's limply-hanging hand and went.

George stood there motionless. He was gazing continually at the little creature, and it seemed to him a picture of undreamt-of beauty. He touched its cheeks, shoulders, arms, hands, fingers. How mysteriously complete it all was! And there it lay, having died without having lived, destined to go from one darkness into another, through a senseless nothingness. There it lay, the sweet tiny body which was ready for life and yet was unable to move. There they shone, those big blue eyes, as though with desire to drink in the light of heaven, and completely blind before they had seen a ray. And there was the small round mouth which was open as though with thirst, but yet could never drink at a mother's breast. There it gazed, that white child-face with its perfect human features, which was never to receive or feel the kiss of a mother, the kiss of a father. How he loved this child! How he loved it, now that it was too late! A choking despair rose within his throat. He could not cry. He looked around him. No one was in the room and it was quite still next door. He had no desire to go into that other room, nor had he any fear. He only felt that it would have been rather senseless. His eye returned to the dead child, and suddenly the poignant question thrilled through him whether it was really bound to be true. Could not every one make a mistake, a physician as much as a layman? He held his open palm before the child's open lips and it was as though something cool was breathed towards him. And then he held both hands over the child's breast and again it seemed as though a light puff were playing over the tiny body. But it felt just the same as in the other place: no breath of life had blown towards him. He now bent down again and his lips touched the child's cool forehead. Something strange, something he scarcely felt tingled through his body to the very tips of his toes. He knew it now; he had lost the game up there in the clouds, his child was dead. Then he slowly lifted his head and turned away. The sight of the garden tempted him into the open. He stepped on to the verandah and saw Doctor Stauber and Frau Rosner sitting on the seat that was propped against the wall — both silent. They looked at him. He turned away as though he did not

know them and went into the garden. The shadow of the house fell obliquely over the lawn, there was still sunlight higher up but it was dull and as though without the strength to illumine the air. Why did he want to think of that light which was sun and yet did not shine, that blue in the heights which was heaven and yet did not bless him? What was the point of the silence of this garden, which should console and comfort him, and yet received him to-day as though it were some strange inhospitable place? It gradually occurred to him that just such a twilight had enveloped him in a dream a short time ago with a dreariness of which he had previously had no idea, and had filled his soul with incomprehensible melancholy. What now? he said to himself aloud. He did not seek for any answer, and only knew that something unforeseen and unalterable had happened that must change the face of the world for him for all time. He thought of the day when his father had died. A wild grief had overwhelmed him then; yet he had been able to cry and the world had not suddenly become dark and void. His father had really lived, had once been young, had worked, loved, had children, experienced joys and sorrows. And the mother who had borne him had not suffered in vain. And even if he himself should have to die to-day, however early it might be, he had nevertheless a life behind him, a life full of light and music, happiness and suffering, hope and anxiety, steeped in all the fulness of the world. And even if Anna had passed away to-day, in the hour when she gave life to a new being, she would as it were have fulfilled her lot and her end would have had its terrible but none the less deep significance. But what had happened to his child was senseless, was revolting — a piece of irony from somewhere or other, whither one could send no question and no answer. What was the point of it all? What had been the significance of these past months with all their dreams, their troubles and their hopes? For he knew, all in a flash, that the expectation of the wonderful hour in which his child was to be born had always lain in the depths of his soul every single day, even those which were most matter-of-fact, those which were most vacant, or those which were most wanton. And he felt ashamed, impoverished, miserable.

He stood by the garden fence at the top end and looked towards the edge of the forest, towards his seat on which he had rested so often, and he felt as though forest and field and seat had previously been his possessions, and that he must now surrender them too, like so much else. In a corner of the garden stood a dark grey neglected summer-house with three little window-apertures and a narrow opening for a door. He had always disliked it, and had only gone in once for a few moments. To-day he felt drawn inside. He sat down on the cracked seat and suddenly felt hidden and soothed, as though all that had happened were less true or could in some inconceivable way be undone. Yet this hallucination soon vanished, he left the inhospitable room and stepped into the open.

I must now go back into the house again, he thought with a sense of exhaustion, and could not quite realise that the dead body of his child must be resting in the dark room, which he could see from here stretching behind the verandah like an unfathomable darkness. He walked slowly down the garden. Anna's mother was standing with a gentleman on the verandah. George recognised old Rosner. He stood there in his overcoat, he had laid his hat in front of him on the table. He passed a pocket handkerchief over his forehead and his red-lidded eyes twitched. He went towards George and pressed his hand. "What a pity that it turned out differently," he said, "than we had all hoped and expected!"

George nodded. He then remembered that the old gentleman's heart had not been quite right during the past week and inquired after his health.

"It is kind of you to ask, Herr Baron. I am a little better, only I find going uphill rather troublesome."

George noticed that the glass door that led to the centre room was closed. "Excuse me," he said to old Rosner, strode straight to the door, opened it and quickly closed it behind him. Frau Golowski and Doctor Stauber were standing near the table and speaking to each other. He walked up to them and they suddenly

stopped talking.

"Well?" he inquired.

Doctor Stauber said: "We have been speaking about the... formalities. Frau Golowski will be kind enough to see to all that."

"Thank you," replied George and held out his hand to Frau Golowski.

"All that," he thought. A coffin, a funeral, a notification to the local registry; a son born of Anna Rosner, spinster, died on the same day. Nothing about the father of course. Yes, his part was finished. Only to-day? Had it not been finished the very second when quite by chance he became a father?

He looked at the table. The cloth was spread over the tiny corpse. Oh, how quick! he thought bitterly. Am I never to see it again? I suppose I may be allowed to, once. He drew the cloth a little away from the body and held it high up. He saw a pale child-face which was quite familiar to him, only since then some one had closed the eyes. The old grandfather's clock in the corner ticked. Six o'clock. Scarcely an hour had passed since his child had been born and died: the fact was already as indisputably certain as though it could never have been otherwise.

He felt a light touch on the shoulder.

"She took it quietly," said Doctor Stauber, standing behind him.

George dropped the cloth over the child's face and turned his head towards the side. "She already knows, then...?"

Doctor Stauber nodded. Frau Golowski had turned away.

"Who told her?" asked George.

"It wasn't necessary to tell her," replied Doctor Stauber, "was it?" He turned to Frau Golowski.

The latter explained: "When I went in to her she just looked at me, and then I saw at once that she already knew."

"And what did she say?"

"Nothing — nothing at all. She turned her eyes towards the window and was quite still. She asked where you had gone, Herr Baron, and what you were doing."

George breathed deeply. The door of Anna's room opened. The Professor came out in a black coat. "She is quite quiet," he said to George. "You can go in to her."

"Did she speak to you about it?" asked George.

The Professor shook his head. Then he said: "I am afraid I must go into town now; you'll excuse me, won't you? I hope things will go on all right. I shall be here early to-morrow any way. Good-bye, dear Herr Baron." He pressed his hand sympathetically. "You'll drive in with me, Doctor Stauber, won't you?"

"Yes," said Doctor Stauber, "I only want to say good-bye to Anna." He went.

George turned to the Professor. "May I ask you something?"

"Please do."

"I should very much like to know, Herr Professor, whether this is simply imagination. It seems to me, you know" — and he again lifted up the cloth from the tiny corpse— "as though this child did not look like a new-born one, more beautiful, so to speak. I feel as though the faces of new-born children were bound to be more wrinkled, more like old men. I can't tell you whether I have ever seen one or whether I've only read about it."

"You are quite right," replied the Professor. "It is just in cases of this kind, and also of course when things turn out more fortunately, that the features of the children are not distorted, are frequently, in fact, quite beautiful." He contemplated the little face with professional sympathy, nodded a few times: "Pity, pity"... let

the cloth fall down again, and George knew that he had seen his child's face for the last time. What name would it have had? Felician.... Good-bye, little Felician!

Doctor Stauber came out of the next room and gently closed the door. "Anna is expecting you," he said to George. The latter gave him his hand, shook hands with the Professor again, nodded to Frau Golowski and went into the next room.

The nurse got up from Anna's side and disappeared out of the room. Opposite the door hung a mirror in which George saw an elegant young gentleman who was pale and was smiling. Anna lay in her bed, which stood clear in the middle of the room, with big clear eyes, which looked straight at George.

"What kind of a figure do I cut?" he thought. He pushed the chair close to her bed with some ceremoniousness, sat down, grasped her hand, put it to his forehead and then kissed her fingers long and almost ardently.

Anna was the first to speak. "You were in the garden?" she asked.

"Yes, I was in the garden."

"I saw you come down from the top some time ago."

"You had better not talk, Anna. Don't you feel it a strain?"

"These few words! Oh no. But you can tell me something...."

He was holding her hand in his all the time and looking at her fingers. Then he said: "Do you know that there is a little summer-house at the top end of the garden? Yes, of course you know.... I only mean, we'd never properly realised it."

"I was in there a few times during the first week," said Anna. "I don't like it."

"No, indeed!"

"Have you done any work this morning?" she then asked.

"What an idea, Anna!"

She shook her head quite gently. "And recently you have been getting on so well with it."

He smiled.

She remained serious. "You were in town yesterday?" she asked.

"You know I was."

"Did you find any letters? I mean important ones."

"You should really not talk so much, Anna. I'll tell you everything right enough. Well then, I found no letters of any importance. There was nothing from Detmold either. Anyway, I'll go and see Professor Viebiger one of these days. But we can talk about these things another time, don't you think? And so far as work goes... I've been having another look at *Tristan* this morning. I even know it down to the smallest detail. I could trust myself to conduct it to-day, if it came to the point."

She was silent and looked at him.

He remembered the evening when he had sat by her side at the Munich opera, as though enveloped in a transparent veil of the notes he loved so well. But he said nothing about it.

It grew dark. Anna's features began to grow dim. "Are you going to town to-day?" she asked.

He had not thought of doing so. But he now felt as though a kind of relief were beckoning to him. Yes, he would go in. What, after all, could he do out here? But he did not answer at once.

Anna began again: "I think you would perhaps like to speak to your brother."

"Yes, I should like to very much. I suppose you are going to sleep soon?"

"I hope so."

"How tired you must be," he said as he stroked her arm.

"No, it is rather different. I feel so awake... I can't tell you how awake I feel.... It seems as though I had never been so awake in my whole life. And I know at the same time that I'm going to sleep more deeply than I ever have... as soon as I've once closed my eyes."

"Yes, of course you will. But may I stay a bit longer with you? I'd really like to go on sitting here till you've fallen asleep."

"No, George, if you are here I can't go to sleep. But just stay a bit longer. It's so nice."

He held her hand all the time and looked out on to the garden, which was now lying in the twilight.

"You weren't very much up at Auhof this year?" said Anna indifferently, as though simply making conversation.

"Oh yes, nearly every day. Didn't I tell you? — I think Else will marry James Wyner and go with him to England."

He knew that she was not thinking of Else but of some one quite different. And he asked himself: Does she perhaps mean... that that is the reason?

A warm puff blew in from outside. Children's voices rang in. George looked out. He saw the white seat gleaming under the pear-tree and thought of how Anna had waited for him there in her flowing dress, beneath the fruit-laden branches, girdled by the gentle miracle of her motherhood. And he asked himself: "Was it fated then that it must end like this? Or was it after all so fated at the moment when we embraced each other for the first time?" The Professor's remark that one to two per cent. of all births ended like that came into his mind. So it was a fact that since people had started being born one or two in every hundred must perish in this senseless fashion at the very moment when they were brought into the light! And so many must die in their first years, and so many in the flower of their youth, and so many as men. And again a fated number put an end to their own lives, like Labinski. And so many were doomed to fail in their attempt, as in Oskar Ehrenberg's case. Why search for reasons? Some law is at work, incomprehensible and inexorable, which we men cannot struggle against. Who is entitled to complain? why should I be the victim? If it doesn't happen to one, it will happen to another... whether innocent or guilty like he was. One to two per cent. get hit, that is heavenly justice. The children who were laughing in the garden opposite, they were allowed to live. Allowed? No, they *must* live, even as his own child had had to die, after the first breath it drew, doomed to travel from one darkness into another, through a senseless nothingness.

It was twilight outside and it was almost night in the room. Anna lay still and motionless. Her hand did not move in George's, but when George got up he saw that her eyes were open. He bent down, hesitated a moment, then put his arm round her neck and kissed her on her lips, which were hot and dry and did not answer his touch. Then he went. In the next room the hanging lamp was alight over the table on which the dead child had lain some while back. The green tablecloth was now spread out as though nothing had happened. The door of Frau Golowski's room was open. The light of a candle shone in, and George knew that his child was sleeping in there, its first and last sleep.

Frau Golowski and Frau Rosner sat next to each other on the sofa by the wall, dumb, and as though huddled together. George went up to them. "Has Herr Rosner gone already?" He turned to Frau Rosner.

"Yes, he rode into the town with the doctors," she answered, and looked at him questioningly.

"She is quiet." George answered her look. "I think she will sleep soundly."

"Won't you take something?" asked Frau Golowski. "You haven't since one o'clock had...."

"No thanks, I'm going into town now. I want to speak to my brother. I am also expecting important letters. I'll be here again early to-morrow." He took his leave, went up to his attic, fetched the *Tristan* score from the balcony into the room, took his stick and overcoat, lit a cigarette and left the house. As soon as he was in the

street he felt freer. An awful upheaval lay behind him. It had ended unhappily, but at any rate it had ended. And Anna was bound to be all right. Of course with mothers as well there was the fated percentage. But it was clear that the possibility of an unfortunate issue was according to the law of probabilities necessarily much less than if the child had remained alive.

He walked through the straggling village with swift strides, tried not to think of anything and looked with forced attention at every single house by which he passed. They were all mean, most of them positively dreary and squalid. Behind them little gardens sloped up to vineyards, cultivated fields and meadows in the evening mist. In an almost empty inn garden a few musicians were sitting by a long table, playing a melancholy waltz on violins, guitars and a concertina. Later on he passed more presentable houses, and he looked in through open windows into decently lighted rooms in which there were tables laid for dinner. He eventually took his seat in a cheerful inn garden, as far away as possible from the other not very numerous customers. He took his meal and soon felt a salutary fatigue come over him. On the tram he almost dozed off in his corner. It was only when the conveyance was driving through more lively streets that he thoroughly woke up and remembered what had happened, with an agonising but arid precision. He got out and walked home through the moist sultriness of the Stadtpark. Felician was not at home. He found a telegram lying on his secretary. It was from Detmold and ran as follows: “We request you kindly to inform us if you can possibly come to us within the next three days. This offer is to be considered for the time being as binding on neither party; travelling expenses paid in any event. — Faithfully, Manager of the Hoftheater.” Next to it lay the red form for the answer.

George was in a state of nervous tension. What should he answer now? The telegram clearly indicated that there was a vacancy for the post of conductor. Should he ask for a postponement? After eight days it would be quite easy to go there for an interview and then come back at once. He found thinking about it a strain. At any rate the matter could wait till to-morrow, and if that was too late then there would be no essential change in the position after all. He would always be welcomed as a special visitor, he knew that already. It was perhaps better not to bind himself... to go on working at his training somewhere, without yet taking obligations or responsibilities upon himself, and then to be ready and equipped for the following year. But what paltry considerations these were, when compared with the terrible event of his life which had occurred to-day! He took up the malachite paper-weight and put it on the telegram. What now...? he asked himself. Go to the club and rout out Felician? Yet that was not quite the place to tell him about the matter. It would really be best to stay at home and wait for him. It was in fact a little tempting to undress at once and lie down. But he certainly would not be able to sleep. So he came to think of tidying up his papers a little once again. He opened the drawer in his secretary, sorted bills and letters and made notes in his note-book. The noise of the street came in through the open windows as though from a distance. He thought of how he had read the letters of his dead parents in the same place in the previous summer after his father’s death, and how the same noise of the town and the same perfume from the park had streamed in to him just like to-day. The year that had elapsed since then seemed in his tired mind to extend into eternities, then contracted again into a short span of time, and something kept whispering in his soul: What for... what for? His child was dead. It would be buried in the churchyard by the Sommerhaidenweg. It would rest there in consecrated ground, from the toilsome journey which it was fated to take from one darkness into another through a senseless nothingness. It would lie under a little cross, as though it had lived and suffered a whole human life.... As though it had lived! It had really lived from the moment when its heart had already begun to beat in its mother’s body. No, even earlier.... It had belonged to the realm of the living from the very moment when its mother’s body had received it. And George thought of how many children of men and women were fated to perish even earlier

than his own child, how many, wished and unwished, were fated to die in the first days of their life without their own mothers even having an idea. And while he dozed with shut eyes, half asleep and half awake, in front of his secretary, he saw nothing but shining crosses standing up on tiny mounds, as though it were a toy cemetery and a reddish yellow toy sun were shining over it. But suddenly the image represented the Cadenabbia cemetery. George was sitting like a little boy on the stone wall which surrounded it, and suddenly turned his gaze down towards the lake. And then there rode in a very long narrow boat, beneath dull yellow sails, with a green shawl on her shoulders, a woman, sitting motionless on the rowing bench, a woman whose face he tried to recognise with vague and almost painful efforts.

The bell rang. George got up. What was it? Oh, of course, there was no one there to open. The servant had been discharged since the first day of the month, and the porter's wife, who now looked after the brothers, was not in the apartment at this hour. George went into the hall and opened the door. Heinrich Bermann was standing in the hall.

"I saw a light in your room from down below," he said. "It was a good idea my first going past your house. I was going, as a matter of fact, to drive out to your place in the country."

Is his manner really so excited? thought George, or do I only think it is? He asked him to come in and sit down.

"Thanks, thanks, I prefer to walk up and down. No, don't light the high lamp. The table lamp's quite enough.... Anyway — how are you getting on out there?"

"A child was born this morning," replied George quietly. "But unfortunately it was dead."

"Still-born?"

"I don't know if one can say that," replied George with a bitter smile; "for it is supposed to have drawn one breath according to the doctor. The pains lasted for three days on end. It was ghastly. Now it's all over."

"Dead! I'm very sorry — I really am." He held out his hand to George.

"It was a boy," said George, "and strangely enough, very beautiful. Quite different from what new-born children usually look like." He then told him, too, how he had stayed quite a time in an inhospitable summer-house which he had never gone into before, and the strange way in which the lighting of the country had suddenly altered. "It was a light," said George, "that places in one's dreams sometimes have. Quite indefinite... like twilight... but rather mournful." While he said this, he knew that he would have described the whole matter quite differently to Felician.

Heinrich sat in the corner of the ottoman and let the other speak. He then began: "It is strange. All this affects me very much, of course, and yet... it calms me at the same time."

"Calms you?"

"Yes. As though certain things which I unhappily had to fear had suddenly grown less probable."

"What kind of things?"

Without listening to him Heinrich went on speaking with set teeth. "Or is it only because I am in the presence of another man's grief? Or is it because I am somewhere else, in a strange flat? That would be quite possible. Haven't you noticed that even one's own death strikes one as something highly improbable, when one is travelling for instance; frequently in fact when one is out for a walk. Man is subject to incomprehensible illusions like that."

Heinrich turned round after a few seconds, as though he had regained his self-control, but remained standing by the window with both hands resting on the sill behind him, and said laconically in a hard voice: "There's the possibility, you see, of the girl whose acquaintance you casually made the other day at my place having committed suicide. Please don't look so startled. As you know, many of her letters hinted that she

would do it."

"Well?" said George.

Heinrich lifted his hand deprecatingly. "I never took it seriously at all. But I got a letter this morning which, I don't quite know how to express it, had an uncanny ring of truth about it. As a matter of fact there is nothing in it which she hasn't already written to me ten or twenty times over; but the tone... the tone.... To come to the point, I am as good as convinced that it has happened this time. Perhaps at this very minute!" He stopped and stared in front of him.

"No, Heinrich." George stepped up to him and put his hand on his shoulder. "No!" he added, more firmly, "I don't believe it at all. I spoke to her a few weeks ago. You know about that. And then she certainly did not give me the impression... I also saw her playing comedy.... If you had seen her acting in that impudent farce, you wouldn't believe it either, Heinrich. She only wants to revenge herself on you for your cruelty. Unconsciously, perhaps. Probably she has convinced herself on many occasions that she cannot go on living, but the fact that she has stuck it out till to-day.... Of course, if she had done it at once...."

Heinrich shook his head impatiently. "Just listen, George. I telegraphed to the Summer Theatre. I inquired if she were still there, suggesting that it was a question of a new part for her, rehearsal of a new piece of mine, or something like that. I have been waiting at home... till now... but there is no answer. If I don't get one, or not a satisfactory one, I'll certainly go there."

"Yes, but why didn't you simply ask if she...."

"If she has killed herself? One doesn't want to make oneself ridiculous, George. I might have asked for news on that point every other day or so, of course.... It would certainly have had a kind of grotesque humour right enough."

"Look here now — you don't believe it yourself?"

"I'll go home now to see if there's a telegram there. Good-bye, George. Forgive me. I couldn't stand it any more at home, you see.... I am really sorry to have bothered you with my own affairs at a time like this. Once more, I ask you to forgive me."

"You had no idea.... And even if you had known.... In my case, it's quite — a finished chapter, so to speak. In my case, there is unfortunately nothing more to do."

He looked excitedly out of the window, over the tops of the trees, towards the red spires and roofs which towered up out of the faint red light of the evening town. Then he said: "I'll come with you, Heinrich. I can't start anything at home. I mean.... If you don't mind my society."

"Mind!... My dear George!..." He pressed his hand.

They went. At first they walked along the park in silence. George remembered his walk with Heinrich through the Prater Allee last autumn, and immediately after that he remembered the May evening when Anna Rosner had appeared in the Waldsteingarten later than the others, and Frau Ehrenberg had whispered to him, "I have asked her specially for you." Yes, for him. If it had not been for that evening Anna would never have become his mistress, and none of all the events which lay heavy on him to-day would ever have happened. Was there some law at work in this? Of course! So many children had to come into the world every year, and a certain number of those out of wedlock, and good Frau Ehrenberg had imagined that inviting Fräulein Anna Rosner for Baron von Wergenthin had been a matter of her own personal fancy.

"Is Anna quite out of danger?" asked Heinrich.

"I hope so," replied George. Then he spoke about the pain which she had suffered, her patience, and her goodness. He felt the need of describing her as a perfect angel, as though he could thereby atone a little for the wrong he had done her.

Heinrich nodded. “She really seems to be one of the few women who are made to be mothers. It isn’t true, you know, that there are many of that kind. Having children — that’s what they’re all there for; but being mothers! And to think of her, of all people, having to suffer like that! I really never had an idea that anything like that could happen.”

George shrugged his shoulders. Then he said: “I had been expecting to see you out there again. I think you even made some promise to that effect when you dined with us and Therese a week ago.”

“Oh yes. Didn’t we squabble dreadfully, Therese and I? It got even more violent on the way home. Really quite funny. We walked, you know, right into the town. The people who met us are absolutely bound to have taken us for a couple of lovers, we quarrelled so dreadfully.”

“And who won in the end?”

“Won? Does it ever happen that any one wins? One only argues to convince oneself, never to convince the other person. Just imagine Therese eventually realising that a rational person can never become a member of any party! Or if I had been driven to confess that my independence of party betokened a lack of philosophy of life, as she contended! Why, we could both have shut up shop straight away. But what do you think of all this talk about a philosophy of life? As though a philosophy of life were anything else than the will and the capacity to see life as it really is. I mean, to envisage it without being led astray by any preconceived idea, without having the impulse to deduce a new law straight away from our particular experience, or to fit our experience into some existing law. But people mean nothing more by the expression ‘philosophy of life’ than a higher kind of devotion to a pet theory, devotion to a pet theory within the sphere of the infinite, so to speak. Or they go on talking about a gloomy or cheerful philosophy according to the colours in which their individual temperament and the accidents of their personal life happen to paint the world for them. People in the full possession of their senses have a philosophy of life and narrow-minded people haven’t. That’s how the matter stands. As a matter of fact, one doesn’t need to be a metaphysician to have a philosophy of life.... Perhaps in fact one shouldn’t be one at all. At any rate, metaphysics have nothing at all to do with the philosophy of life. Each of the philosophers really knew in his heart of hearts that he simply represented a kind of poet. Kant believed in the Thing In Itself, and Schopenhauer in the World as Will and Representation, just like Shakespeare believed in Hamlet, and Beethoven in the Ninth Symphony. They knew that another work of art had come into the world, but they never imagined for a single minute that they had discovered a final ‘truth.’ Every philosophical system, if it has any rhythm or depth, represents another possession for the world. But why should it alter a man’s relationship to the world if he himself has all his wits and senses about him?” He went on speaking with increasing excitement and fell, as it seemed to George, into a feverish maze. George then remembered that Heinrich had once invented a merry-go-round that turned in spirals higher and higher above the earth, to end finally in the top of a tower.

They chose a way through suburban streets, with few people and only moderate lighting. George felt as though he were walking about in a strange town. Suddenly a house appeared that was strangely familiar to him, and he now noticed for the first time that they were passing the house of the Rosner family. There were lights in the dining-room. Probably the old man was sitting there alone, or in the company of his son. Is it possible, thought George, that in a few weeks Anna will be sitting there again at the same table as her mother and father and brother as though nothing had happened? That she will sleep again night after night behind that window with its closed blinds and leave that house day after day to give her wretched lessons.... That she will take up that miserable life again as though nothing at all had changed? No. She should not go back to her family. It would be quite senseless. She must come to him, live with him, the man she belonged to. The Detmold telegram! He had almost forgotten it, but he must talk it over with her. It showed hope and

prospects. Living was cheap in a little town like that. Besides, George's own fortune was a long way from being eaten up. One would be justified in chancing it. Besides, this post simply represented the beginning. Perhaps he would get another one soon in a larger town. In a single night one might be a success without expecting it — that was always the way — and one would have a name, not only as a conductor, but also as a composer, and it need only be two or three years before they could have the child with them.... The child... how the thought raged through his brain!... To think of one being able to forget a thing like that even for a minute.

Heinrich went on speaking all the time. It was quite obvious that he wanted to stupefy himself. He continued to annihilate philosophers. He had just degraded them from poets to jugglers. Every system, yes, every philosophic system and every moral system was nothing but a juggle of words, a flight from the animated fulness of phenomena into the marionette fixity of categories. But that was the very thing which mankind desired. Hence all the philosophies, all the religions, all the moral laws. They were all taking part in that identical flight.

A few, a very few, were given the awful inner faculty of being ready to feel every experience as new and individual — were given the strength to endure standing in a new world as it were, every single minute. And the truth was this: only the man who conquered the cowardly impulse of imprisoning all experiences in words was shown life — that manifold unity, that wondrous thing, in its own true shape.

George had the feeling that Heinrich, with all his talk, was simply trying to succeed in shaking off any sense of responsibility towards a higher law by refusing to recognise any. And with a kind of growing antagonism to Heinrich's silly and extraordinary behaviour he felt that the scheme of the world that had threatened some hours ago to fall to pieces was gradually beginning to put itself together again within his own soul. He had only recently rebelled against the senselessness of the fate which had struck him, and yet he already began to feel vaguely that even what had appeared to him as a grievous misfortune had not been precipitated upon his head out of the void, but that it had come to him along a way which, though darker, was quite as preordained as that which approached him along a far more visible road and which he was accustomed to call necessity.

They were in front of the house in which Heinrich lived. The concierge stood at the door and informed them that he had put a telegram in Heinrich's room a short time ago.

"Oh," said Heinrich indifferently, and slowly went up the stairs. George followed. Heinrich lit a candle in the hall. The telegram lay on the little table. Heinrich opened it, held it near to the flickering light, read it himself and then turned to George. "She's expected for the rehearsal to-morrow, and has not yet turned up." He took the light in his hand and followed by George went into the next room, put the light on the secretary, and walked up and down. George heard through the open window the strumming of a piano resounding over the dark courtyard.

"Is there nothing else in the telegram?" he asked.

"No. But it's obvious that not only has she been absent from the rehearsal, but that she wasn't to be found in her lodgings either. Otherwise, they would certainly have telegraphed that she was ill, or given some explanation or other. Yes, my dear George," he breathed deeply, "it has happened this time."

"Why? There is no proof of it. Scarcely anything to go on."

Heinrich cut short the other's remarks with a curt gesture. He then looked at his watch and said: "There are no more trains to-day.... Yes.... What should one do first?" He stopped, remained standing, and suddenly said: "I'll go to her mother's. Yes. That's the best.... Perhaps — perhaps...."

They left the apartment. They took a conveyance at the next corner.

“Did the mother know anything?” asked George.

“Damn it all,” said Heinrich, “about as much as mothers usually know. It is incredible the small amount of thought people give to what is taking place under their very noses, if they are not compelled to do so by some actual occasion. And most people have no idea how much they really know at the bottom of their hearts without owning up to it. The good woman is bound of course to be somewhat surprised at my springing up so suddenly.... I haven’t seen her for a long time.”

“What will you say to her?”

“Yes, what will I say to her?” repeated Heinrich, and bit at his cigar. “I say, I’ve got a splendid idea. You’ll come with me, George. I’ll introduce you as a manager, eh? You are travelling through, have got to catch a special train for St. Petersburg at eleven o’clock this very day. You’ve heard somewhere or other that the young lady is staying in Vienna, and I as an old friend of the family have been kind enough to introduce you.”

“Do you feel in the mood for comedies like that?” asked George.

“Please forgive me, George, it’s really not at all necessary. I’ll just ask the old woman if she has any news.... What do you say?... How sultry it is to-night!”

They drove over the Ring, through the echoing Burghof, through the streets of the town. George felt in a strange state of tension. Supposing the actress were now really sitting quietly at home with her mother? He felt that it would mean a kind of disillusionment for him. And then he felt ashamed of that emotion. Do I look upon the whole thing as simply a distraction? he thought. What happens to other people... is rarely more than that, Nürnberger would say.... A strange way of distracting oneself in order to forget the death of one’s child.... But what is one to do?... I can’t alter things. I shall be going away in a few days, thank heaven.

The vehicle stopped in front of a house in the neighbourhood of the Praterstern. A train was growling over the viaduct opposite; underneath the avenues of the Prater ran into the darkness. Heinrich dismissed the conveyance. “Thank you very much,” he said to George. “Good-bye.”

“I’ll wait for you here.”

“Will you really? Well, I should be awfully grateful if you would.”

He disappeared through the door. George walked up and down.

In spite of the lateness of the hour it was still fairly lively in the street. The strains of a military band in the Prater carried to the place where he was. A man and a woman went past him; the man carried in his arms a sleeping child, which had slung its hands round its father’s neck. George thought of the garden in Grinzinger, of the unwashed little thing which had stretched out its tiny hands to him from its mother’s arms. Had he been really touched then, as Nürnberger had asserted? No, it was certainly not emotion. Something else perhaps. The vague consciousness of standing with both hands linked in that riveted chain which stretches from ancestors to descendants, of participating in the universal human destiny. Now, he stood suddenly released again, alone... as though spurned by a miracle whose call he had heard without sufficient veneration. It struck ten o’clock from a neighbouring church tower. Only five hours, thought George, and how far away it all seemed! Now he was at liberty to knock about the world as he had done before.... Was he really at liberty?

Heinrich came out of the doorway. The door closed behind him. “Nothing,” he said. “The mother has no idea. I asked her for the address, as though I had something important to communicate to her. I had just come from the Prater, and it had occurred to me... and so on. A nice old woman. The brother sits at a table and copies on a drawing-board out of an illustrated paper a mediæval castle with innumerable turrets.”

“Be candid, for once in a way,” said George. “If you could save her by doing so, wouldn’t you forgive her now?”

“My dear George, don’t you see yet that it is not a question of whether I want to forgive her or not? Just remember this, I could just have stopped loving her, which can frequently happen without one’s being deceived at all. Imagine this — a woman who loves you pursuing you, a woman whose contact for some reason or other makes you shudder swearing to you that she’ll kill herself if you reject her. Would it be your duty to give in? Could you reproach yourself the slightest bit if she really went to her death, through the so-called pangs of despised love? Would you regard yourself as her murderer? It is sheer nonsense, isn’t it? But if you think that it’s what other people call conscience which is now torturing me, you are making a mistake. It is simply anxiety about what has happened to a person who was once very dear to me, and is I suppose still very dear to me. The uncertainty....” He suddenly stared fixedly in one direction.

“What is the matter with you?” asked George.

“Don’t you see? A telegraph messenger is coming towards the door of the house.” Before the man had time to ring Heinrich was at his side, and said a few words which George could not understand.

The messenger seemed to be making objections. Heinrich was answering and George, who had come nearer, could hear him.

“I have been waiting for you here in front of the door because the doctor gave me stringent orders to do so. This telegram contains... perhaps... bad news... and it might be the death of my mother. If you don’t believe me, you just ring and I’ll go into the house with you.” But he already had the telegram in his hands, opened it hurriedly and started to read it by the light of the street lamp. His face remained absolutely immobile. Then he folded the telegram together again, handed it to the messenger, pressed a few silver coins into his hand. “You must now take it in yourself.”

The messenger was surprised, but the tip put him in a better temper.

Heinrich rang and turned away. “Come!” he said to George. They went silently down the street. After a few minutes Heinrich said: “It has happened.”

George felt more violently shocked than he had anticipated. “Is it possible...?” he exclaimed.

“Yes,” said Heinrich. “She drowned herself in the lake — where you spent a few days this summer,” he added in a tone which seemed to imply that George too was somehow partly responsible for what had happened.

“What’s in the telegram?” inquired George.

“It’s from the manager. It contains the news that she has had a fatal accident while out boating. Requests her mother to give further directions.”

He spoke in a cool hard voice, as though he were reading an announcement out of a paper.

“That poor woman! I say, Heinrich, oughtn’t you to....”

“What!... Go to her? What should I be doing there?”

“Who is there, except you, who can at a time like this stand by her... ought to, in fact?”

“Who except me?” He remained standing. “You think that because it happened more or less on my account? I tell you positively that I feel absolutely innocent. The boat out of which she let herself drop, and the waves which received her could not feel more innocent than I do. I just want to settle that point.... But that I should go in and see the mother.... Yes, you are quite right about it.” And he turned again in the direction of the house.

“I will remain with you if you like,” said George.

“What an idea, George! Just go quietly home. What more am I to ask you to do? And remember me to Anna, and tell her how sorry I am.... Well, you know that.... Ah, here we are. You don’t mind my keeping you a few seconds more before I....” He stood silently there. He then began again, and his features became

distorted. “I’ll tell you something, George. It’s like this. It’s a great happiness that at certain times one doesn’t know what has really happened to one. If one immediately realised the awfulness of moments like this, you know, to the extent one realises them afterwards in one’s memory, or realises them before in anticipation — one would go mad. Even you, George — yes, even you. And many do really go mad. Those are probably the people who are granted the gift of realising straight away.... My mistress has drowned herself, do you see? That’s all one can say. Has the same kind of thing really happened to any one else before? Oh no. Of course you think that you have read or heard of something similar. It is not true. To-day is the first time — the first time since the world’s been in existence — that anything like this has ever happened.”

The door opened and closed again. George was alone in the street. His head was dazed, his heart oppressed. He went a few steps, then took a fly and drove home. He saw the dead woman in front of him, just as she had stood in front of the stage door on that bright summer day in her red blouse and short white skirt, with the roving eyes beneath the reddish hair. He would have sworn at the time that she had a *liaison* with the comedy actor who looked like Guido. Perhaps that really was the case. That might be *one* kind of love and what she felt for Heinrich another. Really there were far too few words. You go to your death for one man, you go to bed with another — perhaps the very night before you drown yourself for the first. And what, after all, does a suicide really mean? Only perhaps that at some moment or other one has failed to appreciate death. How many tried again if they had failed once? The conversation with Grace came into his mind, that hot-and-cold conversation by Labinski’s grave on the sunny February day in the thawing snow.

She had confessed to him then that she had not felt any fear or horror when she had found Labinski shot in front of the door of her flat. And when her little sister had died many years ago she had watched the whole night by the death-bed without feeling even a trace of what other people called horror. But, so she told George, she had learned to feel in men’s embraces something that might be rather like that feeling. At first the thing had puzzled her acutely, subsequently she thought she could understand it, but according to what the doctors said she was doomed to barrenness, and that must be the reason why it came about that the moment of supreme delight, which was rendered as it were pointless by this fate, plunged her in terror and apprehension. This had struck George at the time as a piece of affectation. To-day he felt a breath of truth in it for the first time. She had been a strange creature. Would he ever meet again a person of a similar type? Why not? Quite soon, as a matter of fact. A new epoch in his life was now beginning and the next adventure was perhaps waiting for him somewhere or other. Adventure...? Had he a right still to think about such things?... Were not, from to-day onwards, his responsibilities more serious than they had ever been? Did he not love Anna more than he had ever done before? The child was dead, but the next one would live.... Heinrich had spoken the truth: Anna was simply cut out to be a mother. A mother.... But he thought with a shiver: Was she cut out at the same time to be the mother of *my* children? The fly stopped. George got out and went up the two storeys to his apartment. Felician was not yet home. Who knows when he will come? thought George. I can’t wait for him, I’m too tired. He undressed quickly, sank into bed, and a deep sleep enveloped him.

When he woke up his eyes tried to find through the window a white line between field and forest, the Sommerhaidenweg which he had been accustomed to look at for some days. But he only saw the bluish empty sky which a tower was piercing, and suddenly realised that he was at home, and all that he had lived through yesterday came into his mind. Yet he felt fresh and alert in mind and body, and it seemed to him as though apart from the calamity which had befallen him there was a piece of good fortune which he had to remember. Oh yes, the Detmold telegram.... Was it really so lucky? He had not thought so yesterday evening.

There was a knock at his door. Felician came into the room with his hat and stick in his hand. “I didn’t know that you slept at home last night,” he said. “Glad to see you. Well, what’s the news out there?”

George rested his arm on the pillow and looked up towards his brother. “It’s over,” he said; “a boy, but dead,” and he looked straight in front of him.

“Not really,” said Felician with emotion, came up to him and instinctively put his hand upon his brother’s head. He then put hat and stick on one side and sat down on the bed by him, and George could not help thinking of the morning hours of the years of his childhood, when he had often seen his father sitting like that on the edge of the bed when he woke up. He explained to Felician how it had all happened, laying especial stress on Anna’s patience and gentleness; but he felt with a certain sense of misgiving that he had to force himself a bit to keep the tone of seriousness and depression which was appropriate to his news. Felician listened sympathetically, then got up and walked up and down the room. Then George got up, began to dress and told his brother of the remarkable developments of the rest of the evening. He spoke about his walks and drives with Heinrich Bermann and of the strange way in which they had learned at last of the actress’s suicide.

“Oh, that’s the one,” said Felician. “It’s already in the papers, you know.”

“Well, what happened?” asked George curiously.

“She rowed out into the lake and slipped into the water out of the boat.... Well, you can read it.... I suppose you’re now going straight out into the country again?” he added.

“Of course,” replied George, “but I have still got something to tell you, Felician, something which may interest you.” And he told his brother about the Detmold telegram.

Felician seemed surprised. “This is getting serious,” he exclaimed.

“Yes, it’s getting serious,” replied George.

“You have not yet answered?”

“No, how could I?”

“And what do you mean to do?”

“Frankly, I don’t know. You understand I can’t go straight away, particularly under circumstances like this.”

Felician looked reflective. “A little delay probably wouldn’t hurt,” he said then.

“I agree. I must first find out how they’re getting on out there. Of course I should also like to talk it over with Anna.”

“Where have you put the telegram? Can I read it?”

“It’s lying on the secretary,” said George, who was at the moment engaged in tying up his shoes.

Felician went into the next room, took the telegram in his hand and read it. “It is much more urgent,” he observed, “than I thought.”

“It seems to me, Felician, that it still strikes you as strange that I am shortly going to have a real profession.”

Felician stood at his brother’s side again and stroked his hair. “It is perhaps rather providential that the telegram should have come yesterday.”

“Providential! How so?”

“I mean that after such a sad business the prospect of practical occupation ought to do you twice as much good.... But I am afraid I must leave you now. I’ve still got quite a lot to do. Farewell visits among other things.”

“When are you going then, Felician?”

“A week to-day. I say, George, I suppose you are probably coming back from the country to-day?”

“Certainly, if everything is all right out there.”

“Perhaps we might see each other again in the evening.”

“I should like to very much, Felician.”

“Well then, if it suits you I’ll be at home at seven. We might go and have supper together — but alone, not at the club.”

“Yes, with pleasure.”

“And you might do me a favour,” began Felician again after a short silence. “Remember me out there very very kindly... tell her that I sympathise most sincerely.”

“Thank you, Felician. I will tell her.”

“Really, George, I can’t tell you how much it touched me,” continued Felician with warmth. “I only hope that she’ll soon get over it.... And you, too.”

George nodded. “Do you know,” he said gently, “what it was going to be called?”

Felician looked at his brother’s eyes very seriously, then he pressed his hand. “Next time,” he said with a kindly smile. He shook hands with his brother again and went.

George looked after him, torn by varying emotions. Yet he’s not altogether sorry, he thought, that it should have turned out like that.

He got ready quickly and decided to cycle into the country again to-day. It was only when he had got past most of the traffic that he really became conscious of himself. The sky had grown a little dull and a cool wind blew from the hills towards George, like an autumn greeting. He did not want to meet any one in the little village where yesterday’s events were bound to be already known, and took the upper road between the meadows and the garden to the approach from the back. The nearer the moment came when he was to see Anna again, the heavier his heart grew. At the railing he dismounted from his cycle and hesitated a little. The garden was empty. At the bottom lay the house sunk in silence. George breathed deeply and painfully. How different it might have been! he thought, walked down and heard the gravel crunch beneath his feet. He went on to the verandah, leaned his cycle against the railing and looked into the room through the open window. Anna lay there with open eyes. “Good morning,” he cried, as cheerfully as he could.

Frau Golowski, who was sitting by Anna’s bed, got up and said at once: “We’ve had a good sleep, a good sound sleep.”

“That’s right,” said George, and vaulted over the railing into the room.

“You’re very enterprising to-day,” said Anna with her arch smile, which reminded George of long-past times. Frau Golowski informed him that the Professor had been early in the morning, had expressed himself completely satisfied and taken Frau Rosner with him in his carriage into the town. She then went away with a kindly glance.

George bent down over Anna, kissed her with real feeling on the eyes and mouth, pushed the chair nearer, sat down and said: “My brother — sends you his sincere wishes.”

Her lips quivered imperceptibly. “Thank you,” she replied gently, and then remarked: “So you came out on your cycle?”

“Yes,” he replied. “One has to keep a look-out you know on the way, and there are times when it’s rather a sound thing one has to do so.” He then told her how last evening had finished up. He related the whole thing as an exciting story, and it was only in the orthodox way at the end that Anna was allowed to find out how Heinrich’s mistress had ended her life. He expected to see her moved, but she kept a strangely hard expression about her mouth. “It’s really dreadful,” said George. “Don’t you think so?”

“Yes,” replied Anna shortly, and George felt that her kindness completely failed her here. He saw the loathing flowing out of her soul, not tepidly, as though from one person to another, but strong and deep like a

stream of hate from world to world.

He dropped the subject and began again. “Now for something important, my child.” He was smiling but his heart beat a little.

“Well?” she asked tensely.

He took the Detmold telegram out of his breast pocket and read it to her. “What do you think of that?” he asked with affected pride.

“And what did you answer?”

“Nothing so far,” he replied casually, as though he had never thought of taking the matter seriously. “Of course I wanted first to talk it over with you.”

“Well, what do you think?” she asked imperturbably.

“I... shall refuse of course. I’ll wire that I... at any rate, can’t come yet awhile.” And he seriously explained to her that nothing would be lost by a postponement, that he would at any rate be welcomed as a special visitor, and that this pressing request was only due to an accident that one had no right to expect.

She let him go on speaking for a while, then she said: “There you go being casual again. I think you should have made a special point of answering at once and....”

“Well, and....”

“Perhaps have even taken the train there straight away this morning.”

“Instead of coming out to see you — eh?” he jested.

She remained serious. “Why not?” she said, and noticing him jerk his head up in surprise, “I’m getting on very well, thank heaven, George. And even if I were a bit worse you couldn’t do any good, so....”

“Yes, my child,” he interrupted, “it seems to me you don’t appreciate what it really means! Going there, of course, is a fairly simple matter — but — staying there! Staying there at least till Easter! The season lasts till then.”

“Well, George, I think it quite right that you haven’t gone away without first saying goodbye to me. But look here, you’ve got to go anyway, haven’t you? Even though we didn’t actually speak about it during the last weeks we were both quite well aware of it. For whether you go away in a month’s time or the day after to-morrow — or to-day....”

George now began to argue seriously. It was not at all the same thing whether he went away in a month’s time or to-day. One could manage to get used to certain thoughts in the course of a month, and besides, talk over everything properly — with regard to the future.

“What is there so much to talk over?” she replied in a tired voice. “Why, in a month’s time you’ll be.... You’ll have as little chance of taking me with you as you have to-day. I even think that there won’t be any point in our talking seriously about anything until after your return. A great deal will be bound to be cleared up by then.... At any rate, with regard to your prospects....” She looked out of the window into the garden.

George showed mild indignation at her matter-of-fact coolness, which never deserted her, even at a moment like that. “Yes, indeed,” he said, “when one considers — what it means for you to stay here, and me....”

She looked at him. “I know what it means,” she said.

Instinctively he avoided her look, took her hands and kissed them. He felt inwardly harrowed. When he looked up again he saw her eyes resting on him quite maternally, and she spoke to him like a mother. She explained to him that it was *just* because of the future — and there swept around that word a gentle suggestion of actual hope — that he should not miss an opportunity like that. In two or three weeks he could come back from Detmold to Vienna for a few days, for the people there would certainly appreciate that he

must put his affairs over here in order. But above all it was necessary to give them a proof of his seriousness. And if he set any store by her advice there was only one thing to do: take the train that very evening. He need have no anxiety about her. She felt that she was quite out of danger. She felt that quite unmistakably. Of course he would hear from her every day, twice a day if he liked, morning and evening.

He did not yield at once, coming back again to the point that the unexpectedness of this separation would occasion a relapse. She answered that she would much prefer a quick separation like this to the prospect of another four weeks spent in anxiety, emotion and the fear of losing him. And the essential point remained that it was not a question of more than half the year, so they had half the year for themselves, and if everything went all right there would not be many periods of separation for the — the future.

He now began again: "And what will you do in this half-year, while I'm away? It is really...."

She interrupted him. "For the time being it will go on just as it has been going on for years; but I have been thinking this morning about a lot of things."

"The school for singing?"

"That, too. Although of course that is neither so easy nor so simple. And besides," she added, with her arch expression, "it would be a pity if one had to shut it up again too soon. But we'll talk about all that later on. You go now and telegraph."

"Yes, but what!" he exclaimed in such desperation that she could not help laughing.

Then she said: "Quite simple, 'Shall have the honour to present myself at your office to-morrow noon. Yours very obediently or faithfully... or very proudly....'"

He looked at her. Then he kissed her hand and said: "You're certainly the cleverer of us two."

His tone seemed to hint "the cooler too." But a gentle, tender and somewhat mocking look from her turned away the *innuendo*.

"Well, I'll be back again in ten minutes." He left her with a cheerful face, went into the next room and shut the door. Opposite, in that other room, it now occurred to him again forcibly — his dead child lay in its coffin.... For the necessary steps, to use Doctor Stauber's expression of yesterday, were bound to have been already taken. He felt a paroxysm of grievous yearning.

Frau Golowski came out of the hall. She came up to him and spoke with admiration of Anna's resignation and calmness.

George listened somewhat absent-mindedly. His looks kept always glancing through the doorway and at last he said gently: "I should like to see it once more."

She looked at him, at first slightly shocked and then sympathetically.

"Nailed down already?" he asked anxiously.

"Sent away already," replied Frau Golowski slowly.

"Sent away!" His face became convulsed with such agony that the old woman laid her hands on his arm as though to calm him.

"I went to notify it quite early," she said, "and then the other matter took place very quickly. They took it away an hour ago to the mortuary."

"To the mortuary..." George shuddered. He was silent for a long time as though unnerved from having just learned a terrible and completely unexpected piece of news. When he recovered himself again he still felt Frau Golowski's friendly hand upon his arm and saw her kind eyes with their tired lines resting on his face. "So it's all finished," he said, with an indignant look upwards, as though his last hope had been maliciously stolen from him. He then shook hands with Frau Golowski. "And you've undertaken all this, dear lady.... I really don't know... how I can ever...."

A gesture from the old woman deprecated any further thanks.

George left the house, threw a contemptuous glance at the little blue angel, which seemed to look anxiously down at the faded flower-beds, and went into the street. On his way to the post-office he worried over the wording of the telegram that was to announce his arrival at the place of his new profession and his new prospects.

IX



OLD DOCTOR STAUBER and his son sat over their coffee. The old man held a paper in his hand and seemed to be trying to find something. "The hearing of the case," he said, "is not yet fixed."

"Really!" replied Berthold, "Leo Golowski thinks that it will take place in the middle of November, that is to say in about three weeks. Therese, you know, visited her brother a few days ago in prison. They say he is perfectly calm and in quite good spirits."

"Well, who knows? perhaps he will be acquitted," said the old man.

"That's highly improbable, father. He ought to be glad, on the other hand, that he isn't being prosecuted for ordinary murder. An attempt was certainly made to get him prosecuted for it."

"You certainly can't call it a serious attempt, Berthold. You see the Treasury didn't bother about the silly libel to which you are referring."

"But if they had regarded it as a libel," retorted Berthold sharply, "they would have been under an obligation to prosecute the libellers. Beside, it is common knowledge that we are living in a state where no Jew is safe from being convicted to death for ritual murder; so why should the authorities shrink from taking official cognisance of the theory that Jews when they fight duels with pistols with Christians manage — perhaps for religious reasons — to ensure for themselves a criminal advantage? That the Court didn't lack the good-will to take another opportunity of doing a service to the party in power is best seen by the fact that he still remains under arrest pending the trial, in spite of the fact that the high bail was tendered."

"I don't believe the story about the bail," said the old doctor. "Where's Leo Golowski to get fifty thousand gulden from?"

"It wasn't fifty thousand, father, but a hundred thousand, and so far Leo Golowski knows nothing about it. I can tell you in confidence, father, that Salomon Ehrenberg put up the money."

"Indeed! Well, I'll tell you something in confidence too, Berthold."

"Well?"

"It's possible that it won't go to trial at all. Golowski's advocate has presented a petition to quash the proceedings."

Berthold burst out laughing. "On those grounds! And do you think, father, that that can have the slightest prospect of success? Yes, if Leo had fallen and the First-Lieutenant had survived... then perhaps."

The old man shook his head impatiently. "You must always make opposition speeches, my boy, at any price."

"Forgive me, father," said Berthold, twitching his brows. "Every one hasn't got the enviable gift of being able to ignore certain tendencies in public life when they don't concern him personally."

"Is that what I am in the habit of doing, then?" retorted the old man vehemently, and the half-shut eyes beneath the high forehead opened almost bitterly. "But it is you, Berthold, much more than I, who refuse to look where you don't want to see. I think you're beginning to brood over your ideas. You're getting morbid. I had hoped that a stay in another city, in another country, would cure you of certain petty narrow ideas, but they have grown worse instead. I notice it. I can neither understand nor approve any one starting fighting like Leo Golowski did. But to go on standing with your clenched fist in your pocket, so to speak — what's the point of it? Pull yourself together, man. Character and industry always pull through in the end. What's the worst that can happen to you? That you get your professorship a few years later than any one else. I don't

think it is so great a misfortune. They won't be able to ignore your work if it is worth anything...."

"It is not only a question of myself," objected Berthold.

"But it is mostly a matter of second-class interests of that kind. And to come back to our previous topic, it is really very questionable whether if it had been the First-Lieutenant who had shot down Leo Golowski and Ehrenberg, or Ehrenmann[A pun on the word Ehre which means honour] for that matter, would have turned up with a hundred thousand gulden for him. Yes, to be sure, and now you are quite at liberty to take me for an Anti-Semite too, if it amuses you, although I am driving straight into the Rembrandtstrasse to see old Golowski. Well, good-bye, try and come to reason at last." He held out his hand to his son. The latter took it without changing countenance. The old man turned to go. At the door he said: "I suppose we shall see each other this evening at the Medical Society?"

Berthold shook his head. "No, father, I am spending this evening in a less edifying place — the 'Silberne Weintraube,' where there is a meeting of the Social Political Union."

"Which you can't miss?"

"Impossible."

"Well, I wish you would tell me straight out. Are you going to stand for the Landtag?"

"I... am going to stand."

"Indeed! You think you're capable now of being able to face the... unpleasantness which you ran away from last year?"

Berthold looked through the window at the autumn rain. "You know, father," he replied, twitching his brows, "that I wasn't in the right frame of mind then. I now feel strong and armed, in spite of your previous remarks, which have really touched the actual point. And above all I know precisely what I want."

The old man shrugged his shoulders. "I can't understand how any one can give up a definite work... and you will certainly have to give it up, for a man can't serve two masters... to think of dropping something definite to... to make speeches to people whose profession, so to speak, it is to have preconceived opinions — to fight for opinions which are usually not even believed in by the man who puts you forward to represent them."

Berthold shook his head. "I assure you, father, I'm not tempted this time by any oratorical or dialectical ambition. This time I have discovered the sphere in which I hope it will be possible for me to do quite as definite work as in the laboratory. I intend, you know, if I do any good at all, to bother about nothing else except questions of public health. Perhaps I can count on your blessing, father, for this kind of political activity."

"On mine... yes. But how about your own?"

"What do you mean?"

"The blessing to which one might give the name of the inner call."

"You doubt even that," replied Berthold, really hurt.

The servant came in and gave the old doctor a visiting card. He read it. "Tell him I'll be glad to see him in a minute."

The servant went away.

Berthold went on speaking in a state of some excitement. "I feel justified in saying that my training, my knowledge...."

His father interrupted him as he played with the card. "I don't doubt your knowledge or your energy or your industry, but it seems to me that to be able to do any particular good in the sphere of public health you need as well as those excellent qualities another one too, which in my view you only have to a very small

extent: kindness, my dear Berthold, love of mankind."

Berthold shook his head vehemently. "I regard the love of humanity which you mean, father, as absolutely superfluous and rather injurious. Pity — and what else can loving people whom one doesn't personally know really be? — necessarily leads to sentimentalism, to weakness. And when one wants to help whole groups of men then, above all, you must be able to be hard at times, hard to individuals — yes, be ready in fact to sacrifice them if the common good demands it. You only need to consider, father, that the most honest and consistent social hygiene would have the direct result of annihilating diseased people, or at any rate excluding them from all enjoyment of life, and I don't deny that I have all kinds of ideas tending in that way which may seem cruel at the first glance. But the future, I think, belongs to ideas. You needn't be afraid, father, that I shall begin straight away to preach the murder of the unhealthy and the superfluous. But theoretically that's certainly what my programme leads to. Do you know, by the way, whom I had a very interesting conversation with the other day on this very subject?"

"What subject do you mean?"

"To put it precisely, a conversation on the right to kill. With Heinrich Bermann the author, the son of the late Deputy."

"But where did you get the opportunity of seeing him then?"

"The other day at a meeting. Therese Golowski brought him along. You know him, too, don't you, father?"

"Yes," replied the old man, "I've known him for quite a long time." And he added: "I met him again this year in the summer at Anna Rosner's."

Berthold's eyebrows again twitched violently. Then he said sarcastically: "I thought it was something like that. Bermann mentioned, you know, that he had seen you some time ago, but he wouldn't remember exactly where. I concluded that it must have been a case of — discretion. I see. So the Herr Baron thought he would introduce his friends into her house."

"My dear Berthold, your tone seems to suggest that you have not got over a certain matter as completely as you previously hinted."

Berthold shrugged his shoulders. "I have never denied that I have an antipathy for Baron Wergenthin. That is why the whole business was so painful to me from the very beginning."

"Is that why?"

"Yes."

"And yet I think, Berthold, that you would regard the matter differently if you were to meet Anna Rosner again some time or other as a widow — even assuming that her late husband was even more antipathetic to you than Baron von Wergenthin."

"That's possible. One can certainly presume that she has been loved — or at any rate respected, not just taken and — chucked away as soon as the spree was over. I'd have found that rather.... Well, I won't put it any more definitely."

The old man shook his head as he looked at his son. "It really seems as though all the advanced views of you young people break down as soon as your passions and vanities come into question."

"So far as certain questions of cleanness or cleanliness are concerned I do not know that I am guilty of any so-called advanced views, father, and I don't think that you would be particularly delighted either if I felt any desire to be the successor of a more or less dead Baron Wergenthin."

"Certainly not, Berthold. For her sake, especially, for you would torture her to death."

"Don't be uneasy," replied Berthold, "Anna's in no peril from my quarter. It's all over."

"That's a good reason. But, happily, there's an even better one. Baron Wergenthin's neither dead nor has

he cleared out....”

“It doesn’t matter, you know, about the actual word.”

“He has, as you know, a position as a conductor in Germany....”

“What a piece of luck! He has really been very fortunate over the whole thing. Not even having to provide for a child.”

“You have two faults, Berthold. In the first place you are really an unkind man, and in the second place you never let one finish. I was just on the point of saying that it doesn’t seem to be anything like all over between Anna and Baron Wergenthin. Only the day before yesterday she gave me his kind regards.”

Berthold shrugged his shoulders as though the matter were finished so far as he was concerned. “How’s old Rosner?” he asked.

“He’ll pull through all right this time,” replied the old man. “Anyway, I hope that you’ve retained a sufficient sense of detachment to realise that his attacks are not due to his grief about the prodigal daughter, but to a sclerosis of the arteries that is unfortunately fairly far advanced.”

“Is Anna giving lessons again?” asked Berthold after some hesitation.

“Yes,” replied the old man, “but perhaps not much longer.” And he showed his son the visiting card which he was still holding in his hand.

Berthold contracted the corners of his mouth. “Do you think,” he asked ironically, “he has come here to celebrate his wedding, father?”

“I shall soon find that out,” replied the old man. “At any rate I’m very glad to see him again — for I assure you he’s one of the most charming young men I’ve ever met.”

“Extraordinary!” said Berthold. “A quite unique winner of hearts. Even Therese raves about him. And Heinrich Bermann the other day, it was almost funny.... Oh well, a slim handsome blonde young man, a baron, a German, a Christian — what Jew could withstand the magic?... Goodbye, father.”

“Berthold!”

“Well, what?” He bit his lips.

“Pull yourself together! Remember what you are.”

“I... remember.”

“No, you don’t. Otherwise you couldn’t forget so often who the others are.”

Berthold lifted his head interrogatively.

“You should really go to Rosner’s some time. It is not worthy of you to let Anna see your disapproval in so — childish a fashion. Goodbye... hope you’ll have a good time in the ‘Silberne Weintraube.” He shook hands with his son and then went into his consulting-room. He opened the door of the waiting-room and with a friendly nod of the head invited George von Wergenthin, who was turning over the leaves of an album, to come in.

“I must first apologise to you, Herr Doctor,” said George, after he had sat down. “My departure was so sudden.... Unfortunately I had no opportunity of saying goodbye to you, of thanking you personally for your great....”

Doctor Stauber deprecated his thanks. “I am very glad to see you again,” he said, “I suppose you are here in Vienna on leave?”

“Of course,” replied George. “I’ve only got three days’ leave; they need me there so urgently, you see,” he added with a modest smile.

Doctor Stauber sat opposite him in the chair behind his secretary and contemplated him kindly. “You feel very satisfied with your new position, so Anna says.”

"Oh yes; of course there are all kinds of difficulties when one plunges into a new kind of life like I did. But taking it all round everything has turned out much easier than I expected."

"So I hear. And that you have already had a very good introduction at Court."

George smiled. "Anna of course imagines that episode to be more magnificent than it really was. I played once at the Hereditary Prince's and a lady member of the theatre sang two songs of mine there; that's all. But what is much more important is that I have a chance of being appointed conductor this very season."

"I thought you were already."

"No, Herr Doctor, not yet officially. I have already conducted a few times as deputy, *Freischütz* and *Undine*, but for the time being I am only accompanist."

In response to further questions from the doctor he told him some more about his activities at the Detmold Opera. He then got up and said goodbye.

"Perhaps I can give you a lift part of the way in my carriage," said the doctor. "I am driving to the Rembrandtstrasse to the Golowskis'."

"Thanks very much, Herr Doctor, but that's not on my way. Anyway, I intend to visit Frau Golowski in the course of to-morrow. She's not ill, is she?"

"No. Of course the excitement of the last weeks is bound to have had some effect upon her."

George mentioned that he had written a few words to her and also to Leo immediately after the duel. "When one thinks that it might have turned out differently..." he added.

Doctor Stauber looked in front of him. "Having children," he said, "is a happiness which one pays for by instalments."

At the door George began somewhat hesitatingly: "I also wanted... to inquire of you, Herr Doctor, about the real state of Herr Rosner's health.... I must say I found him looking better than I had expected from Anna's letters."

"I hope that he will get all right again," replied Stauber. "But of course one must remember that he's an old man. He's even old for his years."

"But it's not a case of anything serious?"

"Old age is a serious business in itself," replied Doctor Stauber, "especially as his whole antecedent life, his youth and manhood, were not particularly cheerful."

George, whose eyes had been roving round the room, suddenly exclaimed: "I've just thought of it, Herr Doctor. I've never sent you back the books you were good enough to lend me in the spring. And now I'm afraid all our things are at the depository, silver, furniture, pictures and the books as well. So I must ask you, Herr Doctor, to have patience till the spring."

"If you have no worse troubles than that, my dear Baron...."

They went slowly down the stairs and Doctor Stauber inquired after Felician.

"He's in Athens," replied George, "I've heard from him twice, not yet in any great detail.... How strange it is, Herr Doctor, coming back as a stranger to a town where one was at home a short time ago, and staying at an hotel as a gentleman from Detmold!..."

Doctor Stauber got into his carriage. George asked him to give his very best regards to Frau Golowski.

"I'll tell her. And I wish you all further success, my dear Baron. Goodbye."

It was five by the Stephanskirche clock. George was faced with an empty hour. He decided to stroll slowly into the suburb in the thin tepid autumn rain. He had scarcely slept at all in the train and he had been at the Rosners' two hours after his arrival. Anna herself had opened the door to him, greeted him with an affectionate kiss, and quickly taken him into the room, where her parents welcomed him with more politeness

than sincerity. The mother, who preserved her usual embarrassed and slightly injured tone, did not say much. The father, sitting in the corner of the ottoman, with a blue-coloured rug over his knees, felt it incumbent on him to inquire about the social and musical conditions of the little capital from which George had come. Then he had remained alone awhile with Anna. They first exchanged question and answer with undue quickness, and subsequently endearments, which were both flat and awkward, and they both seemed disappointed that they did not feel the happiness of seeing each other again with anything like the intensity which their love had given them to expect. Very soon a pupil of Anna's put in an appearance. George took his leave and hurriedly arranged an appointment for the evening with his mistress. He would fetch her from Bittner's and then take her to the opera to see the performance of *Tristan*.

He had then taken his midday meal by the big window of a restaurant in the Ringstrasse, made purchases and given orders at his tradesmen's, looked up Heinrich, whom he did not find at home, and finally, obeying a sudden idea, decided to pay his "return-thanks" visit to Doctor Stauber. He now walked on slowly through the streets which he knew so well and which already seemed to have an atmosphere of strangeness; and he thought of the town from which he came and in which he was feeling at home far more quickly than he had expected. Count Malnitz had received him with great kindness from the very first moment. He had the plan of reforming the opera in accordance with modern ideas and wanted to win George to him, so the latter thought, as a collaborator and friend in his far-reaching projects. For the first conductor, excellent musician no doubt though he might be, was nowadays more of a court official than an artist. He had been appointed when he was five-and-twenty and had now been stationed in the little town for thirty years, a paterfamilias with six children, respected, contented and without ambition. Soon after his arrival George heard songs sung at a concert which a long time ago had spread the fame of the young conductor throughout almost the whole world. George was unable to understand the impression produced by these quite out-of-date pieces, but none the less warmly complimented the composer with a kindly sympathy for the ageing man in whose eyes there seemed to shine the distant glamour of a richer and more promising past. George frequently asked himself if the old conductor still thought of the fact that he had once been taken for a man who was destined to go far, and whether he, like so many other of the inhabitants, regarded the little town as a hub from which the rays of influence and of fame fell far around. George had only found in a few any desire for a larger and more complex sphere of activity; it often seemed to him as though they rather treated him with a kind of good-natured pity because he came from a great town, and in particular from Vienna. Whenever the name of that town was mentioned in front of people George noticed in their smug and somewhat sarcastic manner that almost as regularly as harmonies accompany the bass, certain other words would be immediately switched into the conversation, even though they were not specifically mentioned: waltzes... café... *süsses Mädel*[Literally "sweet girl." The phrase was invented by Schnitzler himself]... grilled chicken... fiacre... parliamentary scandal. George was often irritated by this and made up his mind to do all he could to improve his countrymen's reputation in Detmold. He had been asked to come because the third conductor, a quite young man, had suddenly died, and so George, on the very first day, had to sit at the piano in the little rehearsal-room and perform singing accompaniments. It went off excellently. He rejoiced in his gifts, which were stronger and surer than he had himself hoped, and it seemed to him, so far as he could recollect, that Anna had slightly underestimated his talent. Apart from this he threw himself more seriously into his compositions than he had ever done before. He worked at an overture which had originated out of the *motifs* of Bermann's opera. He had begun a violin sonata, and the mythical quintette, as Else had called it once, was nearly finished. It was going to be performed this very winter in one of the Court *soirées*, which were under the direction of the deputy-conductor of the Detmold orchestra, a talented young man, the only person in fact

in his new home with whom George had so far become at all intimate, and with whom he was accustomed to take his meals at the "Elephant."

George still inhabited a fine room in this inn, with a view on to the big square planted with lindens, and from day to day put off taking an apartment. He was quite uncertain whether he would be still in Detmold next year and he also had the feeling that it would be bound to wound Anna, if he were to do anything which looked like settling down as a bachelor for any length of time. Yet he had said no word in his letters to her about any of the prospects of the future, just as she, on her side, left off addressing to him doubting or impatient questions. They practically only communicated to each other actual facts. She wrote of her gradual return into her old groove of life, and he of all the new surroundings among which he must first settle down. Although there was practically nothing which he had to keep from her, he made a special point of slurring over many things that might easily lead to a misunderstanding. How was one to express in words the strange atmosphere which permeated in the morning the rehearsals in the half-dark body of the theatre, when the odour of cosmetics, perfumes, dresses, gas, old wood and fresh paint came down from the stage to the stalls, when figures which one did not at first recognise hopped to and fro between the rows of seats in ordinary or stage dress, when some breath which was heavy and scented blew gently against one's neck? And how was one to describe a glance which flashed down from the eyes of a young singer while one looked up to her from the keys...? Or when one saw this young singer home through the Theaterplatz and the Königsstrasse in the broad light of noon and used the opportunity not merely to talk about the part of Micaela, which one had just been studying with her, but also about all kinds of other, though no doubt fairly innocent, things? Could one recount this to one's mistress in Vienna without her reading something suspicious between the lines? And even if one had laid stress on the fact that Micaela was engaged to a young doctor in Berlin who adored her as much as she did him it would scarcely have improved matters, for that would really have looked as though one felt obliged to answer and reassure.

How strange, thought George, that it is just this very evening that she is singing the Micaela which I practised with her, and that I am going here along this same road out to Mariahilf which I used to take a year ago so frequently and so gladly. He thought of a specific evening when he had fetched Anna from out there, walked about with her in the quiet streets, looked at funny photographs in a doorway and finally walked with her on the cool stone flags of an ancient church, in a soft but how ominous conversation about an unknown future.... And now all had turned out quite differently to what he had hoped — quite differently.... Why did it strike him like that?... What had he anticipated then at that time?... Had not the year that had just passed been wonderfully rich and beautiful with its happiness and its grief? And did he not love Anna to-day better and more deeply than ever? And had he not frequently yearned for her in that fresh town as hotly as though for a woman who had never yet belonged to him? To-day's early meeting with its flat and awkward endearments in the sinister atmosphere of a grey hour really ought not to lead him astray....

He was at the appointed place. When he looked up to the lighted windows, behind which Anna was giving her lesson, a slight emotion came over him, and when she came out of the door the next minute, in a simple English dress and a grey felt hat on her rich dark blonde hair, holding a book in her hand, just as she had appeared a year ago, an unexpected feeling of happiness suddenly streamed over him. She did not see him at once, for he was standing in the shadow of a house. She opened her umbrella and went as far as the corner where she had been in the habit of waiting for him the previous year. He gazed at her for a while and was glad that she looked so fine and distinguished. Then he followed her quickly, and caught her up in a few strides. She informed him at once that she could not go to the opera with him. Her father had been taken ill this afternoon.

George was very disappointed. “Won’t you at any rate come with me for the first act?”

She shook her head. “No, I am not very keen on that sort of thing. It is much better for you to give the seat to some friend. Go and fetch Nürnberger or Bermann.”

“No,” he replied, “if you can’t come with me I’d rather go alone. I should have enjoyed it so much. I am not very keen on the performance personally. I’d prefer to stay with you... so far as I am concerned, even at your people’s; but I must go. I have — to make a report.”

Anna backed him up. “Of course you must go,” and she added: “I wouldn’t advise you, too, to spend an evening with us. It’s really not particularly jolly.”

He had taken the umbrella out of her hand and held it over her, while she held his arm. “I say, Anna,” he said, “I should like to make a suggestion!” He was surprised that he should be looking for a way of leading up to it, and began hesitatingly: “My few days in Vienna are, of course, more or less unsettled and cut up — and now there’s this depressed atmosphere at your people’s as well.... We are not really managing to see anything of each other: don’t you agree?”

She nodded without looking at him.

“So wouldn’t you like to come part of the way with me, Anna, when I go back again?”

She looked at him sideways in her arch way and did not answer.

He went on speaking. “I can, you see, quite well manage to get an extra day’s leave if I wire to the theatre. It would really be awfully nice if we had a few hours all to ourselves.”

She consented with sincerity but not enthusiasm and made her decision depend on the state of her father’s health. She then asked him how he had spent the day.

He told her in detail, and also added his programme for to-morrow. “So we two will see each other in the evening,” he said. “I’ll come to your place if that’s convenient, and then we’ll arrange further details.”

“Yes,” said Anna, and looked in front of her down the damp brown-grey street.

He tried again to persuade her to come to the opera with him, but it was futile. He then inquired about her singing lessons and followed that up by speaking about his own activity, as though he had to convince her that after all he was not having a much better time than she was. And he referred to his letters, in which he had written about everything in full detail.

“So far as that’s concerned...” she said suddenly in quite a hard voice.... And when, hurt by her tone, he could not help throwing back his head, she proceeded: “What is there really in letters, however detailed they are?”

He knew what she was thinking about — he felt a certain heaviness at heart. Was there not in the very inexorableness of this silence all that she refused to voice aloud? — question, reproach and rage. He had already felt this morning and now felt again that a certain sense of positive enmity to himself was rising within her, against which she herself seemed to be struggling in vain. Was this morning the first time...? Had it not dated far longer back? Perhaps it had been always there, from the very first moment when they had belonged to each other, and even in the moments of their supreme happiness? Had not this hostile feeling been present when she pressed her bosom against his behind dark curtains to the music of the organ, when she waited for him in the room at the hotel in Rome, with eyes red with tears, while he had been watching with delight from Monte Pincio the sun setting in the Campagna, and had realised that he was finding this hour of solitary enjoyment the most wonderful in the whole journey? Had it not been present when he ran down the gravel path on a hot morning, dropped down at her feet and cried in her lap as though it had been the lap of a mother? And when he had sat by her bedside and looked out into the garden at eventime, while the dead child she had borne an hour ago lay silent on the white linen cloth, had it not been there again, drearier than ever,

so that it would have been almost unbearable, if they had not long ago managed to put up with it, in the way one manages to endure so much of the unsatisfactoriness and so much of the sorrow that comes up out of the depths of human intercourse? And now how painfully did he feel this sense of hostility as he walked arm-in-arm with her, holding the umbrella carefully over her, down the damp streets? It was there again — menacing and familiar. The words which she had spoken were still ringing in his ears: "What is there really in letters, however detailed they are?"... But even more solemnly there rang in his ears the unspoken words: What does the most ardent kiss in which body and soul seem to fuse really come to? What does the fact that we travelled together for months through strange lands really come to? What does the fact that I had a child by you come to? What does the fact that you cried out in my lap your remorse for your deception? What does it all come to, when you still go and leave me quite alone?... Why, I was alone at the very moment when my body drank in the germ of life which I carried within me for nine months, which was intended to live amongst strangers, though our own child, and which did not wish to remain on earth!

But while all this sank heavily into his soul he agreed in a light tone that she was really quite right and that letters — even though they were actually twenty pages long — could not contain much in particular; and while a harrowing pity for her sprang up in him he gently expressed the hope that there would be a time in which they would neither of them any longer be thrown back upon mere letters. And then he found words of greater tenderness, told her of those lonely walks of his in the outskirts of the strange town when he thought of her; told her of the hours in that meaningless hotel room, with its view of the linden-planted square, and of his yearning for her, which was always present whether he sat alone at his work or accompanied singers at the pianoforte or chatted with new acquaintances. But when he stood with her in front of the house door, with her hand in his, and looked up into her eyes as he murmured a bright goodbye, he was shocked to see in them the flickering out of a jaded sense of disillusionment that had almost ceased to be painful. And he knew that all the words which he had spoken to her had meant nothing to her, had meant less than nothing, since the one word, the word she scarcely hoped for any more, and yet longed for all the time, had not come.

A quarter of an hour later George was sitting in his stall at the opera. He was first a little depressed and limp, but the pleasure of enjoyment soon began to course through his veins. And when Brangäne threw the king's cloak over her mistress's shoulders, Kurwenal announced the king's approach and the ship's crew on the deck hailed the land amid all the glory of the resplendent heavens, George had long ago forgotten a bad night in the train, some boring commissions, an extremely forced conversation with an old Jewish doctor and a walk on the wet pavement which mirrored the light of the lamps by the side of a young lady who looked decent, distinguished and somewhat depressed. And when the curtain fell for the first time and the light streamed through the enormous room, upholstered in red and gold, he did not feel any unpleasant sense of being brought back to sober life, but he rather felt as though he were plunging his head out of one dream into another; while a reality which was full of all kinds of wretched complications flew impotently past somewhere outside. The atmosphere of this house, so it seemed to him, had never made him so intensely happy as it did to-day. He had never felt so palpably that all the audience, so long as they were here, were protected in some mystic way against all the pain and all the dirt of life. He stood up in his corner seat, which was in front by the middle gangway, saw many a pleased glance turn towards him and felt conscious of looking handsome, elegant and even somewhat unusual. And besides that he was — and this filled him with satisfaction — a man who had a profession, a position, a man who sat in this very theatre with a responsible commission to perform, as a kind of envoy from a German court theatre. He looked round with his opera-glass. From the back of the stalls Gleissner greeted him with a somewhat too familiar nod of his head and seemed immediately afterwards to be expatiating on George's personal characteristics to the young lady who

sat next to him. Who could she be? Was it the harlot which the author, with his hobby for experimenting on souls, wanted to make into a saint, or was it the saint whom he wanted to make into a harlot? Hard to say, thought George. They'd both look about the same, halfway.

George felt the lens of an opera-glass burning on the top of his head. He looked up. It was Else, who was looking down to him from a box in the first tier. Frau Ehrenberg sat near her and between them there bowed over the front of the box a tall young man who was no other than James Wyner. George bowed and two minutes later stepped into the box, to find himself greeted with friendliness but not a trace of surprise. Else, in a low-cut black velvet dress, with a small pearl necklet round her throat and a somewhat strange though interesting coiffure, held out her hand to him. "And how did you manage to get here? On leave? Sacked? Run away?"

George explained, briefly and good-humouredly.

"It was very nice of you," said Frau Ehrenberg, "to have sent us a line from Detmold."

"He really shouldn't have done that, either," remarked Else. "It was quite calculated to make one think that he had gone off to America with some one or other."

James was standing in the middle of the box, tall and gaunt, with his chiselled face and his dark smooth hair parted at the side. "Well, George, how do you like Detmold?"

Else was looking at him with dropped eyelashes. She seemed delighted with his way of still always speaking German as though he had to translate it to himself out of English. Anyway, she employed the occasion to make a joke and said: "How George likes it in Detmold! I am afraid your question is indiscreet, James." Then she turned to George. "We are engaged, you know."

"We haven't yet sent out any cards, you know," added Frau Ehrenberg.

George offered his congratulations.

"Lunch with us to-morrow," said Frau Ehrenberg. "You will only meet a few people. I'm sure they'll all be very glad to see you again — Sissy, Frau Oberberger, Willy Eissler."

George excused himself. He could not bind himself to any specific time, but if he possibly could he would very much like to look in during the course of the afternoon.

"Quite so," said Else in a low voice, without looking at him, while her arm, in its long white glove, lay carelessly on the ledge of the box. "You are probably spending the middle of the day in the family circle."

George pretended not to hear and praised to-night's performance. James declared that he liked *Tristan* better than all the other operas by Wagner, including the *Meistersingers*.

Else simply remarked: "It's awfully fine, but as a matter of fact I'm all against love-philtres and things in that line."

George explained that the love-philtre was to be regarded as a symbol, whereupon Else declared that she had a distaste for symbols as well. The first signal for the second act was given. George took his leave and rushed downstairs with only just enough time to take his place before the curtain rose. He remembered again the semi-official capacity in which he was sitting in the theatre to-night, and determined not to surrender himself unreservedly to his impressions. He soon managed to discover that it was possible to produce the love-scene quite differently from the way in which it was being done to-night. Nor did he think it right that Melot, by whose hand Tristan was doomed to die, should be represented by a second-rate singer, as was nearly always the case. After the fall of the curtain on the second act he got up with a kind of increased self-consciousness, stood up in his seat and looked frequently up to the box in the first tier, from which Frau Ehrenberg nodded to him benevolently, while Else spoke to James, who was standing still behind her with crossed arms. It struck George that he would see James's sister again to-morrow. Did she still often think of

that wonderful hour in the park in the afternoon, amid the dark green sultriness of the park, in the warm perfume of the moss and the pines? How far away that was! He then remembered a fleeting kiss in the nocturnal shadow of the garden wall at Lugano. How far away that was too! He thought of the evening under the plane-tree, and the conversation about Leo came again into his mind. A remarkable fellow that Leo, really. How consistently he had stuck to his plan! For he must have formed it a long time ago. And obviously Leo had only waited for the day when he could doff his uniform to put it into execution. George had received no answer to the letter which he had immediately written him after hearing about the duel. He resolved to visit Leo in prison if it were possible.

A man in the first row greeted him. It was Ralph Skelton. George arranged by pantomimic signs to meet him at the end of the performance.

The lights were extinguished, the prelude to the third act began. George heard the tired sea-waves surging against the desolate beach and the grievous sighs of a mortally wounded hero were wafted through the blue thin air. Where had he heard this last? Hadn't it been in Munich...? No, it couldn't be so far back. And he suddenly remembered the hour when the sheets of the *Tristan* music had been spread open before him on a balcony beneath a wooden gable. A sunny path opposite ran to the churchyard between field and forest, while a cross had flashed with its golden light; down in the house a woman he loved had groaned in agony and he had felt sick at heart. And yet this memory, too, had its own melancholy sweetness, like all else that had completely passed. The balcony, the little blue angel between the flowers, the white seat under the pear-tree, where was it all now? He would see the house again once more, once more before he left Vienna.

The curtain rose. The shawm rang out yearningly beneath the pale expanse of an unsympathetic heaven. The wounded hero slumbered in the shade of the linden branches, and by his head watched Kurwenal the faithful. The shawm was silent, the herdsman bent questioningly over the wall and Kurwenal made answer. By Jove, that was a voice of unusual timbre! If we only had a baritone like that, thought George. And many other things, too, which we need! If he were only given the requisite power he felt himself able, in the course of time, to turn the modest theatre at which he worked into a first-class stage. He dreamed of model performances to which people would stream from far and wide. He no longer sat there as an envoy, but as a man to whom it was perhaps vouchsafed to be himself a leader in not too distant days. Further and higher coursed his hopes. Perhaps just a few years — and his own original harmonies would be ringing through a spacious hall of a musical festival, and the audience would be listening as thrilled as the one to-day, while somewhere outside a hollow reality would be flowing impotently past. Impotently? That was the question. Did he know whether it was given him to compel human beings by his art as it had been given to the master to whom they were listening to-day — to triumph over the difficulty, wretchedness and awfulness of everyday life? Impatience and doubt tried to rise out of his soul; but his will and common-sense quickly banished them and he now felt again the pure happiness he always experienced when he heard beautiful music, without thinking of the fact that he often wished himself to do creative work and obtain recognition for doing it.

In moments like this the only relation to his beloved art of which he was conscious was that he was able to understand it with deeper appreciation than any other human being. And he felt that Heinrich had spoken the truth when they had ridden together through a forest damp with the morning dew: it was not creative work — it was simply the atmosphere of his art which was necessary to his existence. He was not one of the damned, like Heinrich, who always felt driven to catch hold of things, to mould them, to preserve them, and who found his world fall to pieces whenever it tried to escape from his creative hand.

Isolde in Brangäne's arms had dropped dead over Tristan's body, the last notes were dying away, the curtain fell. George cast a glance up to the box in the first tier. Else stood by the ledge with her look turned

towards him, while James put her dark-red cloak over her shoulders, and it was only now, that after a nod of the head as quick as though she had meant no one to notice it, she turned towards the exit. Remarkable, thought George from a distance: there is a certain... melancholy romantic something about the way she carries herself, about many of her movements. It is then that she reminds me most of the gipsy girl of Nice, or the strange young person with whom I stood in front of the Titian Venus in Florence.... Did she ever love me? No. And she doesn't love her James either. Who is it then?... Perhaps... it was really that mad drawing-master in Florence. Or no one at all. Or Heinrich, of all people?...

He met Skelton in the *foyer*. "Back again?" queried the latter.

"Only for a few days," replied George.

It transpired that Skelton had not really known what George was doing and had thought that he was on a kind of musical tour through the German towns for the purposes of study. He was now more or less surprised to hear that George was here on leave and had been practically commissioned by the manager to inspect the new production of *Tristan*. "Will this suit you?" said Skelton. "I've got an appointment with Breitner; at the '*Imperial*,' the white room."

"Excellent," replied George. "I'm staying there."

Doctor von Breitner was already smoking one of his celebrated big cigars when the two men appeared at his table. "What a surprise!" he exclaimed, when George greeted him. He had heard that George was engaged as conductor in Düsseldorf.

"Detmold," said George, and he thought: "The people here don't bother about me particularly.... But what does it matter?"

Skelton described the *Tristan* performance and George mentioned that he had spoken to the Ehrenbergs.

"Do you know that Oskar Ehrenberg is on his way to India or Ceylon?" asked Doctor von Breitner.

"Really!"

"And whom do you think with?"

"Some woman, I suppose?"

"Oh, of course. I've even heard they've got five or seven women with them."

"Who?— 'they.'"

"Oskar Ehrenberg... and... have a guess.... Well, the Prince of Guastalla!"

"Impossible!"

"Funny, eh? They became very thick this year at Ostend or at Spa.... *Cherchez*... et cetera. It seems that just as there are women, you know, for whom people fight duels there's also another class across whom, as it were, you shake hands. Now they've left Europe together. Perhaps they'll found a kingdom on some island or other and Oskar Ehrenberg will be prime minister."

Willy Eissler appeared. His complexion was sallow, his voice hoarse and he looked as if he had been keeping late hours. "Hullo, Baron! Forgive me not being thunderstruck but I have already heard that you are here. Some one or other saw you in the Kärtnerstrasse."

George requested Willy to remember Count Malnitz to his father. He himself, he was sorry to say, had no time on this occasion to look up the old gentleman, to whom, as he observed with a pretty mock-modesty, he owed his position in Detmold.

"So far as your future is concerned, Baron," said Willy, "I never had any anxiety about it, particularly since I heard Bellini sing your songs last year — or was it further back? But it is quite a good idea of yours, deciding to leave Vienna. You'd have been bound to have been taken for a dilettante here for a cool twenty or thirty years. That's always the way in Vienna. I know it. When people know that a man comes of a good

family, has a taste too for pretty ties, good cigarettes and various other amenities of life, they don't believe that he has real artistic capacity. You wouldn't be taken seriously here without proof from outside.... So hurry up and furnish us with a brilliant one, Baron."

"I'll make an effort to," said George.

"By the way, have you heard the latest, gentlemen?" began Willy again. "Leo Golowski, the one-year-volunteer who shot First-Lieutenant Sefranek, is free."

"Let out on bail?" asked George.

"No, he's quite free. His advocate addressed a petition to the Emperor to quash the proceedings, and it turned out successful to-day."

"Incredible!" exclaimed Breitner.

"Why are you so surprised, Breitner?" said Willy. "It is possible, you know, for something sensible to happen in Austria once in a blue moon."

"A duel is never sensible," said Skelton, "and therefore a pardon for a duel can't be sensible either."

"A duel, my dear Skelton, is either something very much worse or something very much better than sensible," replied Willy. "It is either a ghastly folly or a relentless necessity, either a crime or an act of deliverance. It is not sensible and doesn't need to be so. In exceptional cases, one can't make any headway at all with common-sense, and I am sure you too will concede, Skelton, that in a case like the one of which we have just been speaking a duel was inevitable."

"Absolutely," said Breitner.

"I can imagine a polity," observed Skelton, "in which differences of that kind were settled by a court."

"Differences of that kind settled by a court! Oh, I say!... Do you really think, Skelton, that in a case where there is no question of right or of possession at issue, but where men confront each other with a stupendous hate, do you really think that a proper settlement could be arrived at by means of a fine or imprisonment? The fact, gentlemen, that refusal to fight a duel in such cases is regarded as a piece of cowardice by all people who possess temperament, honour and honesty has a fairly deep significance. In the case of Jews at any rate," he added. "So far as the Catholics are concerned it is well known that it is only their orthodoxy which keeps them from fighting."

"That's certainly the case," said Breitner simply.

George wanted to know details of the affair between Leo Golowski and the First-Lieutenant.

"Quite so," said Willy. "Of course you've only just arrived. Well, the First-Lieutenant gave him a fine ragging for the whole year, and as a matter of fact — —"

"I know the prelude," interrupted George. "Part of it from first-hand information."

"Really! Well, the prelude, to stick to that expression, was over on the first of October. I mean Leo Golowski had finished his year of service. And on the second he placed himself in front of the barracks early in the morning and quietly waited till the First-Lieutenant came out of the door. As soon as he did he stepped up to him; the First-Lieutenant reached for his sword, but Leo Golowski grabs hold of his hand, doesn't let it go, puts his other fist in front of his forehead. There is a story, too, that Leo is supposed to have flung the following words at the First-Lieutenant.... I don't know if it's true."

"What words?" asked George curiously.

"'You were worth more than I was yesterday, Herr First-Lieutenant; now we are on an equality for the time being — but one of us will be worth more than the other again by this time to-morrow.'"

"Somewhat Talmudic," remarked Breitner.

"You, of course, must be the best judge of that, Breitner," replied Willy, and went on with his story. "Well,

the duel took place next morning in the fields by the Danube — three exchanges of ball at twenty paces without advancing. If that proved abortive the sword till one or other was *hors de combat*.... The first shots missed on both sides, and after the second... after the second, I say, Golowski was really worth more than the First-Lieutenant, for the latter was worth nothing, less than nothing — a dead man."

"Poor devil," said Breitner.

Willy shrugged his shoulders. "He just happened to have caught a tartar. I'm sorry, too, but one must admit that Austria would be a different place in many respects if all Jews would behave like Leo Golowski in similar cases. Unfortunately...."

Skelton smiled. "You know, Willy, I don't like any one to say anything against the Jews when I am there. I like them, and I should be sorry if people wanted to solve the Jewish question by a series of duels, for when it was all over there wouldn't be a single male specimen left of that excellent race."

At the end of the conversation Skelton had to admit that the duel could not be abolished in Austria for the present. But he reserved the right of putting the question whether that fact was really an argument in favour of the duel, and not rather an argument against Austria, since many other countries — he refrained from mentioning any out of a sense of modesty — had discarded the duel for centuries. And did he go too far if he ventured to designate Austria — the country, too, in which he had felt really at home for the last six years — as the country of social shams? In that country more than anywhere else there existed wild disputes without a touch of hate and a kind of tender love without the need of fidelity. Quite humorous personal likings existed or came into existence between political opponents; party colleagues, on the other hand, reviled, libelled and betrayed each other. You would only find a few people who would vouchsafe specific views on men and things, and anyway even these few would be only too ready to make reservations and admit exceptions. The political conflict there gave one quite the impression as though the apparently most bitter enemies, while exchanging their most virulent abuse, winked to each other: "It's not meant so seriously."

"What do you think, Skelton?" asked Willy. "Would you wink, too, if the bullets were flying on both sides?"

"You certainly would, Willy, unless death were staring you in the face. But that circumstance, I think, doesn't affect one's mood but only one's demeanour."

They went on sitting together for a long time and continued gossiping. George heard all kinds of news. He learned among other things that Demeter Stanzides had concluded the purchase of the estate on the Hungarian-Croatian frontier, and that the Rattenmamsell was looking forward to a happy event. Willy Eissler was much excited at the result of this crossing of the races, and amused himself in the meanwhile by inventing names for the expected child, such as Israel Pius or Rebecca Portiuncula.

Subsequently the whole party betook itself to the neighbouring café. George played a game of billiards with Breitner and then went up to his room. He made out in bed a time-table for the next day and finally sank into a deliciously deep sleep.

The paper he had ordered the day before was brought in with the tea in the morning, together with a telegram. The manager requested him to report on a singer. To George's delight it was the one he had heard yesterday in Kurwenal. He was also allowed to stay three days beyond his specified leave, "in order to put his affairs in order at his convenience," since an alteration of the programme happened to allow it. Excellent, really, thought George. It struck him that he had completely forgotten his original intention of wiring for a prolongation of his leave. I have got even more time for Anna now than I thought, he reflected. We might perhaps go into the mountains. The autumn days are fine and mild, and at this time one would be pretty well alone and undisturbed anywhere. But supposing there is an accident again — an — accident — again!...

Those were the very words in which the thought had flown through his mind. He bit his lips. Was that how he had suddenly come to regard the matter? An accident.... Where was the time when he had thought of himself almost with pride as a link in an endless chain which went from the first ancestors to the last descendants? And for a few moments he seemed to himself like a failure in the sphere of love, somewhat dubious and pitiable.

He ran his eye over the paper. The proceedings against Leo Golowski had been quashed by an Imperial pardon. He had been discharged from prison last evening. George was very glad and decided to visit Leo this very day. He then sent a telegram to the Count, and made out a report with due formality and detail on yesterday's performance. When he got out into the street it was nearly eleven. The air had the cool clearness of autumn. George felt thoroughly rested, refreshed and in a good temper. The day lay before him rich with hopes and promised all kinds of excitement. Only something troubled him without his immediately knowing what it was.... Oh yes, the visit in the Paulanergasse, the depressing rooms, the ailing father, the aggrieved mother. I'll simply fetch Anna, he thought, take her for a walk and then go and have supper somewhere with her. He passed a flower shop, bought some wonderful dark-red roses and had them sent to Anna with a card on which he wrote: "A thousand wishes. Goodbye till the evening." When he had done this he felt easier in his mind. He then went through the streets in the centre of the town to the old house in which Nürnberger lived. He climbed up the five storeys. A slatternly old servant with a dark cloth over her head opened the door and ushered him into her master's room. Nürnberger was standing by the window with his head slightly bent, in the brown high-cut lounge-suit which he liked to wear at home. He was not alone. Heinrich, of all people, got up from the old arm-chair in front of the secretary with a manuscript in his hand. George was heartily welcomed.

"Has your being in Vienna anything to do with the crisis in the management of the opera?" asked Nürnberger. He refused to allow this observation to be simply passed over as a joke. "Look here," he said, "if little boys who a short time ago were only in a position to give formal proof of their connection with German literature on the strength of the regularity of their visits to a literary café, are invited to take appointments as readers on the Berlin stage, well, in an age like this I see no occasion for astonishment if Baron Wergenthin is fetched in triumph to the Vienna opera after his no doubt strenuous six weeks' career as the conductor of a German Court theatre."

George paid a tribute to truth by explaining that he had only obtained a short leave to put his Vienna affairs in order, and did not forget to mention that he had seen the new production of *Tristan* yesterday as a kind of agent for his manager, but he smiled ironically at himself all the time. Then he gave a short and fairly humorous description of his experiences up to the present in the little capital. He even touched jestingly on the Court concerts as though he were far from taking his position, his present successes, the theatre, or indeed life in general with any particular seriousness.

Conversation then turned on Leo Golowski's release from prison. Nürnberger rejoiced at this unhoped-for issue, but yet firmly refused to be surprised at it, for the most highly improbable things always happened in life, and particularly in Austria, as they all knew very well. But when George mentioned the rumour of Oskar Ehrenberg's yachting trip with the Prince as a new proof of the soundness of Nürnberger's theory, he was at first inclined nevertheless to be slightly sceptical. Yet he finished by admitting its possibility, since his imagination, as he had known for a long time, was invariably surpassed by reality.

Heinrich looked at the time. It was time for him to say goodbye.

"Haven't I disturbed you, gentlemen?" asked George. "I think you were reading something, Heinrich, when I came in?"

“I had already finished,” replied Heinrich.

“You’ll read me the last act to-morrow, Heinrich?” said Nürnberger.

“I have no intention of doing so,” replied Heinrich with a laugh. “If the first two acts are as great a frost in the theatre as they were with you, my dear Nürnberger, it will be positively impossible to play the thing through to the end. We’ll assume, Nürnberger, that you rush indignantly out of the stalls into the open air. I’ll let you off the cat-calls and the rotten eggs.”

“Hang it all!” exclaimed George.

“You’re exaggerating again, Heinrich,” said Nürnberger. “I only ventured to make a few objections,” he said, turning to George, “that’s all. But he’s an author, you know.”

“It all depends on what you mean by ‘objection,’” said Heinrich. “After all, it is only an objection to the life of a fellow human being if you cut his head open with a hatchet; only it’s a fairly effective one.” He pointed to his manuscript and turned to George. “You know what that is? My political tragi-comedy. No wreaths, by request.”

Nürnberger laughed. “I assure you, Heinrich, you could still make something really splendid out of your subject. You can even keep the whole scenario and a number of the characters. All you need to do is to make up your mind to be less fair when you revise your draft.”

“But surely his fairness is a fine thing,” said George.

Nürnberger shook his head. “One may be anywhere else, only not in the drama,” and turning to Heinrich again, “In a piece like that, which deals with a question of the day, or indeed several questions, as you really intended, you’ll never do any good with a purely objective treatment. The theatre public demands that the subjects tackled by the author should be definitely settled, or that at any rate some illusion of that kind should be created. For of course there never is any real solution, and an apparent solution can only be made by a man who has the courage or the simplicity or the temperament to take sides. You’ll soon appreciate the fact, my dear Heinrich, that fairness is no good in the drama.”

“Do you know, Nürnberger,” said Heinrich, “one perhaps might do some good even with fairness. I think I simply haven’t got the right kind. As a matter of fact, you know, I’ve no desire at all to be fair. I imagine it must be so wonderfully nice to be unfair. I think it would be the most healthy gymnastic exercise for one’s soul that one could possibly practise. It must do one such a lot of good to be able really to hate the man whose views you are combating. It saves one, I’m sure, a great deal of inner strength which you can expend far better yourself in the actual fight. Yes, if one still preserves fairness of heart.... But my fairness is here,” and he pointed to his forehead. “I do not stand above parties either, but I belong to them all in a kind of way, or am against them all. I have not got the divine but the dialectical fairness. And that’s why” — he held his manuscript high up— “it has resulted in such a boring and fruitless lot of twaddle.”

“Woe to the man,” said Nürnberger, “who is rash enough to write anything like that about you.”

“Well, you see,” replied Heinrich with a smile, “if some one else were to say it, one couldn’t suppress the slight suspicion that he might be right. But now I must really go. Good-bye, George. I’m very sorry that you missed me yesterday. When are you leaving again?”

“To-morrow.”

“Anyway, I shall see you before you leave. I’m home to-day the whole afternoon and evening. You will find a man who has resolutely turned away from the questions of the day and devoted himself again to the eternal problems, death and love.... Do you believe in death, by-the-bye, Nürnberger? I am not asking you about love.”

“That somewhat cheap joke from a man in your position,” said Nürnberger, “makes me suspect that in

spite of your very dignified demeanour my criticism has....”

“No, Nürnberger, I swear to you that I am not wounded. I have rather a comfortable sensation of the whole thing being finished with.”

“Finished with, why so? It is still quite possible that I’ve made a mistake, and that this very piece, which I didn’t think quite a success, will have a success on the stage which will make you into a millionaire. I should be deeply grieved if on account of my criticism, which may be very far from being authoritative....”

“Quite so, quite so, Nürnberger. We must all of us always admit the possibility that we may be mistaken. And the next time I’ll write another piece, and one with the following title too: ‘*Nobody’s going to take me in*,’ and you shall be the hero of it, Nürnberger.”

Nürnberger smiled. “... I? That means you’ll take a man whom you imagine you know, that you’ll try to describe those sides of his character which suit your game — that you’ll suppress others which are no use to you, and the result....”

“The result,” interrupted Heinrich, “will be a portrait taken by a mad photographer with a spoilt camera during an earthquake and an eclipse of the sun. Is that right, or is there anything missing?”

“The psychology ought to be exhaustive,” said Nürnberger.

Heinrich took his leave in boisterous spirits and went away with his rolled-up manuscript. When he had gone George remarked: “His good temper strikes me as a bit of a pose, you know.”

“Do you think so? I have always found him in remarkably good form lately.”

“In really good form? Do you seriously think so? After what he has gone through?”

“Why not? Men who are so almost exclusively self-centred as he is get over emotional troubles with surprising quickness. Characters of that type, and as a matter of fact other kinds of men as well, feel the slightest physical discomfort far more acutely than any kind of sentimental pain, even the faithlessness and death of the persons they happen to love. It comes no doubt from the fact that every emotional pain flatters our vanity somehow or other, and that you can’t say the same thing about an attack of typhoid or a catarrh in the stomach. Then there is this additional point about artistic people, for while catarrh of the stomach provides positively no copy at all (at any rate that used to be reasonably certain a short time ago) you can get anything you jolly well like out of your emotional pains, from lyric poems down to works on philosophy.”

“Emotional pains are of very different kinds, of course,” replied George. “And being deceived or deserted by a mistress... or even her dying a natural death... is still rather a different thing to her killing herself on our account.”

“Do you know for a certainty,” replied Nürnberger, “that Heinrich’s mistress really killed herself on his account?”

“Didn’t Heinrich tell you, then?...”

“Of course, but that doesn’t prove much. Even the shrewdest amongst us are always fools about the things which concern ourselves.”

Such remarks as these on the part of Nürnberger produced a strangely disconcerting effect on George. They belonged to the class of which Nürnberger was rather fond, and which, as Heinrich had once observed, quite destroyed all the point of all human intercourse, and in fact of all human relations.

Nürnberger went on speaking. “We only know two facts. One is that our friend once had a *liaison* with a girl and the other that the girl in question threw herself into the water. We both of us know practically nothing about all the intervening facts, and Heinrich probably doesn’t know anything more about them either. None of us can know why she killed herself, and perhaps the poor girl herself didn’t know either.”

George looked through the window and saw roofs, chimneys and weather-beaten pipes, while fairly near

was the light-grey tower with the broken stone cupola. The sky opposite was pale and empty. It suddenly occurred to George that Nürnberger had not yet made any inquiry about Anna. What was he probably thinking? Thinking no doubt that George had deserted her, and that she had already consoled herself with another lover. Why did I come to Vienna? he thought desultorily, as though his journey had had no other purpose than to listen to Nürnberger giving him what had now turned out to be a sufficiently pessimistic analysis of life. It struck twelve. George took his leave. Nürnberger accompanied him as far as the door and thanked him for his visit. He inquired earnestly about what George was doing in his new home, about his work and his new acquaintances, as though their previous conversation on the subject had not really counted, and now learned for the first time of the accident which was responsible for George's sudden appointment in the little town.

"Yes, that's just what I always say," he then remarked. "It is not we who make our fate, but some circumstance outside us usually sees to that — some circumstance which we were not in a position to influence in any way, which we never have a chance of bringing into the sphere of our calculations. After all, do you deserve any credit...? I feel justified in putting this question, much as I respect your talent. Nor does old Eissler, whose interest in your affairs you once told me about, deserve any credit either for your being wired to from Detmold and finding your true sphere of work there so quickly. No. An innocent man, some one you don't know, had to die a sudden death to enable you to find that particular place vacant. And what a lot of other things which you were equally unable to influence, and which you were quite unable to foresee, had to come on the scene to enable you to leave Vienna with a light heart — to enable you, in fact, to leave it at all."

George felt hurt. "What do you mean by a light heart?" he asked.

"I mean a lighter heart than you would have had under other circumstances. If the little creature had remained alive who knows whether you...."

"You can take it from me that I would have gone away, even then. And Anna would have taken it quite as much as a matter of course as she does now. Don't you believe me? Why, perhaps I'd have gone with an even lighter heart if that matter had turned out otherwise. Why, it was Anna who persuaded me to accept. I was quite undecided. You have no idea what a good sensible creature Anna is."

"Oh, I don't doubt it at all. According to all you have told me about her from time to time, she certainly seems to have behaved with more dignity in her position than young ladies of her social status are usually accustomed to exhibit on such occasions."

"My dear Herr Nürnberger, the position really wasn't as dreadful as all that."

"Come, don't say that. For however much things may have been made easier by your courtesy and consideration, take it from me that the young lady is bound to have felt frequently during the last months the irregularity of her position. I am sure there isn't a single member of the feminine sex, however daring and advanced may be her views, who doesn't prefer in a case like that to have a ring on her finger. And it's all in favour, too, of your friend's sensible and dignified behaviour that she never allowed you to notice it, and that she took the bitter disillusionment at the end of these nine months, which were certainly not entirely a bed of roses, with calmness and self-possession."

"Disillusionment is rather a mild word. Pain would perhaps be more correct."

"I dare say it was both. But in this case, as in most others, the burning wound of pain heals more quickly than the throbbing piercing wound of disillusionment."

"I don't quite understand."

"Well, my dear George, you don't doubt, do you, that if the little creature had remained alive you two

would have married very quickly; why, you'd even be married this very day."

"And you think that now, just because we have no child.... Yes, you seem to be of the opinion that... that... it's all over between us. But you are quite wrong, quite wrong, my dear friend."

"My dear George," replied Nürnberger, "both of us would prefer not to speak about the future. Neither you nor I know the place where a strand of our fate is being spun at this very moment. You didn't have the slightest inkling, either, when that conductor was attacked by a stroke, and if I now wish you luck in your future career I don't know whose death I have not conjured down by that very wish."

They took leave of each other on the landing. Nürnberger cried after George from the stairs: "Let me hear from you now and then."

George turned round once more. "And mind you do the same." He only saw Nürnberger's gesture of resigned remonstrance, smiled involuntarily, hurried down the stairs and took a conveyance at the nearest corner.

He pondered over Nürnberger and Bermann on his way to the Golowskis'. What a strange relationship it was between them. A scene which he thought he had seen some time or other in a dream came into George's mind. The two sat opposite each other, each held a mirror in front of the other. The other saw himself in it with the mirror in his hand, and in that mirror the other again with his mirror in his hand, and so on to infinity; but did either of them really know the other, did either of them really know himself? George's mind became dizzy. He then thought of Anna. Was Nürnberger right again? Was it really all over? Could it really ever end? Ever?... Life is long! But were even the ensuing months dangerous? No. That was not to be taken seriously, however it might turn out. Perhaps Micaela.... And in Easter he would be in Vienna again. Then there came the summer, they would be together, and then? Yes, what then? Engagement? Herr Rosner and Frau Rosner's son-in-law, Joseph's brother-in-law! Oh well, what did he care about the family? It was Anna after all who was going to be his wife, that good gentle sensible creature.

The fly stopped in front of an ugly fairly new house, painted yellow, in a wide monotonous street. George told the driver to wait and went into the doorway. The house looked quite dilapidated from inside. Mortar had crumbled away from the walls in many places and the steps were dirty. There was a smell of bad fat coming out of some of the kitchen windows. Two fat Jewesses were talking on the landing of the first storey in a jargon which George found positively intolerable. One of them said to a boy whom she held by the hand: "Moritz, let the gentleman pass."

Why does she say that? thought George, there's plenty of room; she obviously wants to get into conversation with me. As though I could do her any harm or any good! An expression of Heinrich's in a long-past conversation came into his mind: "An enemy's country."

A servant-girl showed him into a room which he immediately recognised as Leo's. Books and papers on the writing-table, the piano open, a Gladstone bag, which was still not completely unpacked, open on the sofa. The door opened the next minute. Leo came in, embraced his visitor and kissed him so quickly on both cheeks that the man who was welcomed with such heartiness had no time to be embarrassed.

"This is nice of you," said Leo, and shook both his hands.

"You can't imagine how glad I was..." began George.

"I believe you.... But please come in with me. We are having dinner, you know, but it's nearly over."

He took him into the next room. The family was gathered round the table.

"I don't think you know my father yet," observed Leo, and introduced them to each other.

Old Golowski got up, put away the serviette which he had tied round his neck and held out his hand to George. The latter was surprised that the old man should look so completely different from what he had

expected. He was not patriarchal, grey-bearded and venerable, but with his clean-shaven face and broad cunning features looked more like an ageing provincial comedian than anything else.

"I am very glad to make your acquaintance, Herr Baron," he said, while one could read in his crafty eyes... "I know everything."

Therese hastily asked George the conventional questions: when he had come, how long he was staying, how he was; he answered patiently and courteously, and she looked him in the face with animation and curiosity.

Then he asked Leo about his plans for the near future.

"I must first practise the piano industriously, so as not to make a fool of myself before my pupils. People were very nice to me, of course. I had books, as many as I wanted, but they certainly didn't put a piano at my disposition." He turned to Therese. "You should certainly flog that point to death in one of your next speeches. This bad treatment of prisoners awaiting trial must be abolished."

"It was no laughing matter for him this time yesterday," said old Golowski.

"If you think by any chance," said Therese, "that the good luck which happened to come your way will alter my views you are making a violent mistake. On the contrary." And turning to George she continued: "Theoretically, you know, I am absolutely against their having let him out. If you'd simply knocked the fellow down dead, as you would have been quite entitled to do, without this abominable farce of a duel you'd never have been let out, but would have served your five to ten years for a certainty. But since you went in for this ghastly life-and-death gamble which is favoured by the State, because you cringed down to the military point of view you've been pardoned. Am I not right?" She turned again to George.

The latter only nodded and thought of the poor young man whom Leo had shot, who as a matter of fact had had nothing else against the Jews except that he disliked them just as much as most people did after all — and whose real fault had only been that he had tried it on the wrong man.

Leo stroked his sister's hair and said to her: "Look here, if you say publicly in your next speech what you've just said to-day within these four walls you'll really impress me."

"Yes, and you'll impress me," replied Therese, "if you take a ticket to Jerusalem to-morrow with old Ehrenberg."

They got up from the table. Leo invited George to come into his room with him.

"Shall I be disturbing you?" asked Therese. "I too would like to see something of him, you know."

They all three sat in Leo's room and chatted. Leo seemed to be enjoying his regained freedom without either scruples or remorse. George felt strangely affected by this. Therese sat on the sofa in a dark well-fitting dress. To-day was the first occasion on which she resembled the young lady who had drunk Asti under a plane-tree in Lugano, when she was the mistress of a cavalry officer, and who had subsequently kissed some one else. She asked George to play the piano. She had never yet heard him. He sat down, played something from *Tristan* and then improvised with happy inspiration. Leo expressed his appreciation.

"What a pity that he is not staying," said Therese, as she leaned against the wall and crossed her hands over her high coiffure.

"I am coming back at Easter," replied George, and looked at her.

"But only to disappear again," said Therese.

"That may be," replied George, and the thought that his home was no longer here, that he had no home at all anywhere, and would not have for a long time, suddenly overwhelmed him.

"How would it be," said Leo, "if we went on a tour together in the summer? — you, Bermann and I? I promise you that you won't be bored by theoretical conversation like you were once last autumn... do you still

remember?"

"Oh well," said Therese, stretching herself, "nothing will come of it anyway. Deeds, gentlemen!"

"And what comes of deeds?" asked Leo. "Putting them at the highest, they simply save individual situations for the time being."

"Yes, deeds which you do for yourself," said Therese. "But I only call a real deed what one is capable of doing for others, without any feeling of revenge, without any personal vanity, and if possible anonymously."

At last George had to go. What a lot of things he still had to see to.

"I'll come part of the way with you," said Therese to him.

Leo embraced him again, and said: "It really was nice of you."

Therese disappeared to fetch her hat and jacket. George went into the next room. Old Frau Golowski seemed to have been waiting for him; with a strangely anxious face she came up to him and put an envelope in his hand.

"What is that?"

"The account, Herr Baron. I didn't want to give it to Anna.... It might perhaps have upset her too much."

"Oh yes...." He put the envelope in his pocket and thought that it felt strangely different to any other....

Therese appeared with a little Spanish hat, ready to go out. "Here I am. Goodbye, mamma. Shan't be home for dinner."

She went down the stairs with George and threw him sideways a glance of pleasure.

"Where can I take you?" asked George.

"Just take me along with you. I'll get out somewhere."

They got in, the vehicle went on. She put to him all kinds of questions which he had already answered in the apartment, as though she took it for granted that he was now bound to be more candid with her than before the others. She did not learn anything except that he felt comfortable in his new surroundings and that his work gave him satisfaction. Had his appearance been a great surprise for Anna? No, not at all. He had of course given her notice of it. And was it really true that he meant to come back again at Easter? It was his definite intention....

She seemed surprised. "Do you know that I had almost imagined...."

"What?"

"That we would never see you again!"

He was somewhat moved and made no answer. The thought then ran through his mind: Would it not have been more sensible...? He was sitting quite close to Therese and felt the warmth of her body, as he had done before in Lugano. In what dream of hers might she now be living — in the dark jumbled dream of making humanity happy, or the light gay dream of a new romantic adventure? She kept looking insistently out of the window. He took her hand, without resistance, and put it to his lips.

She suddenly turned round to him and said innocently: "Yes, stop now. I'd better get out here."

He let go her hand and looked at Therese.

"Yes, my dear George. What wouldn't one fall into," she said, "if one didn't" — she gave an ironic smile — "have to sacrifice oneself for humanity? Do you know what I often think?... Perhaps all this is only a flight from myself."

"Why.... Why do you take to flight?"

"Goodbye, George."

The vehicle stopped. Therese got out, a young man stood still and stared at her, she disappeared in the crowd. I don't think she'll finish up on the scaffold, thought George. He drove to his hotel, had his midday

meal, lit a cigarette, changed his clothes and went to Ehrenbergs'.

James, Sissy, Willy Eissler and Frau Oberberger were with the ladies of the house in the dining-room taking black coffee. George sat down between Else and Sissy, drank a glass of Benedictine and answered with patience and good humour all the questions which his new activities had provoked. They soon went into the drawing-room, and he now sat for a time in the raised alcove with Frau Oberberger, who looked young again to-day and was particularly anxious to hear more intimate details about George's personal experiences in Detmold. She refused to believe him when he denied having started intrigues with all the singers in the place. Of course she simply regarded theatrical life as nothing but a pretext and opportunity for romantic adventures. Anyway, she always made a point of thinking she detected the most monstrous goings-on in the *coulisses* behind the curtain, in the dressing-rooms and in the manager's office. When George had no option but to disillusion her, by his report of the simple, respectable, almost philistine life of the members of the opera, and by the description of his own hardworking life, she visibly began to go to pieces, and soon he found himself sitting opposite an aged woman, in whom he recognised the same person as had appeared to him last summer, first in the box of a little white-and-red theatre and later in a now almost forgotten dream. He then went and stood with Sissy near the marble Isis, and each sought to find in the eyes of the other during their harmless chatter a memory of an ardent hour beneath the deep shade of a dark green park in the afternoon. But to-day that memory seemed to them both to be plunged in unfathomable depths.

Then he went and sat next to Else at the little table on which books and photographs were lying. She first addressed to him some conventional questions like all the rest. But suddenly she asked quite unexpectedly and somewhat gently: "How is your child?"

"My child...." He hesitated. "Tell me, Else, why do you ask me...? Is it simply curiosity?"

"You are making a mistake, George," she replied calmly and seriously. "You usually make mistakes about me, as a matter of fact. You take me for quite superficial, or God knows what. Well, there's no point in talking about it any more. Anyway, my asking after the child is not quite so incomprehensible. I should very much like to see it sometime."

"You would like to see it?" He was moved.

"Yes, I even had another idea.... But one which you will probably think quite mad."

"Let's hear it, Else."

"I was thinking, you know, we might take it with us."

"Who, we?"

"James and I."

"To England?"

"Who's told you we're going to England? We are staying here. We've already taken a place in 'Cottage' [A fashionable district in Vienna] outside. No one need know that it is your child."

"What a romantic thought!"

"Good gracious, why romantic? Anna can't keep it with her, and you certainly can't. Where could you put it during the rehearsals? In the prompter's box, I suppose?"

George smiled. "You are very kind, Else."

"I'm not kind at all. I only think why should an innocent little creature pay the penalty or suffer for.... Oh well, I mean it can't help it.... After all... is it a boy?"

"It was a boy." He paused, then he said gently: "It's dead, you know." And he looked in front of him.

"What! Oh, I see... you want to protect yourself against my officiousness."

"No, Else, how can you?... No, Else, in matters like that one doesn't lie."

"It's true, then? But how did it...?"

"It was still-born."

She looked at the ground. "No? How awful!" She shook her head. "How awful!... And now she's lost everything quite suddenly."

George gave a slight start and was unable to answer. How every one seemed to take it for granted that the Anna affair was finished. And Else did not pity him at all. She had no idea of how the death of the child had shocked him. How could she have an idea either? What did she know of the hour when the garden had lost its colour for him and the heavens their light, because his own beautiful child lay dead within the house?

Frau Ehrenberg joined them. She declared that she was particularly satisfied with George. Anyway, she had never doubted that he would show what he was made of as soon as he once got started in a profession. She was firmly convinced, too, that they would have him here in Vienna as a conductor in three to five years. George pooh-poohed the idea. For the time being he had not thought of coming back to Vienna. He felt that people worked more and with greater seriousness outside in Germany. Here one always ran the danger of losing oneself.

Frau Ehrenberg agreed, and took the opportunity to complain about Heinrich Bermann, who had lapsed into silence as an author and now never showed himself anywhere.

George defended him and felt himself obliged to state positively that Heinrich was more industrious than he had ever been. But Frau Ehrenberg had other examples of the corrupting influence of the Vienna air, particularly Nürnberger, who now seemed to have cut himself completely off from the world. As for what had happened to Oskar... could that have happened in any other town except Vienna? Did George know, by-the-by, that Oskar was travelling with the Prince of Guastalla? Her tone did not indicate that she regarded that as anything special, but George noticed that she was a little proud of it, and entertained the opinion somewhere at the back of her mind that Oskar had turned out all right after all.

While George was speaking to Frau Ehrenberg he noticed that Else, who had retired with James into the recess, was directing glances towards him — glances full of melancholy and of knowledge, which almost frightened him. He soon took his leave, had a feeling that Else's handshake was inconceivably cold, while those of the others were amiably indifferent, and went.

"How funny it all is," he thought in the vehicle which drove him to Heinrich's. People knew everything before he did. They had known of his *liaison* with Anna before it had begun, and now they knew that it was over before he did himself. He had half a mind to show them all that they were making a mistake. Of course, in so vital an affair as that one should be very careful not to decide on one's course of action out of considerations of pique. It was a good thing that a few months were now before him in which he could pull himself together and have time for mature reflection. It would be good for Anna, too, particularly good for her, perhaps. Yesterday's walk with her in the rain over the brown wet streets came into his mind again, and struck him as ineffably sad. Alas, for the hours in the arched room into which the strains of the organ opposite had vibrated through the floating curtain of snow — where were they? Yes, where had these hours gone to? And so many other wonderful hours as well! He saw himself and Anna again in his mind's eye, as a young couple on their honeymoon, walking through streets which had the wonderful atmosphere of a strange land; commonplace hotel rooms, where he had only stayed with her for a few days, suddenly presented themselves before him, consecrated as it were by the perfume of memory.... Then his love appeared to him, sitting on a white seat, beneath the heavy branches, with her high forehead girdled with the deceptive presentiment of gentle motherhood. And finally she stood there with a sheet of music in her hand while the white curtain fluttered gently in the wind. And when he realised that it was the same room in which she was now waiting

for him, and that not more than a year had gone by since that evening hour in the late summer when she had sung his own songs for the first time to his own accompaniment, he breathed heavily and almost anxiously in his corner.

When he was in Heinrich's room a few minutes afterwards he asked him not to look upon this as a visit. He only wanted to shake hands with him. He would fetch him for a walk to-morrow morning if that suited him.... Yes — the idea occurred to him while he was speaking — for a kind of farewell walk in the Salmansdorf Forest.

Heinrich agreed, but asked him to stay just a few minutes. George asked him jestingly if he had already recovered from his failure of this morning.

Heinrich pointed to the secretary, on which were lying loose sheets covered with large nervous writing. "Do you know what that is? I have taken up *Ägidius* again, and just before you came I thought of an ending which was more or less feasible. I'll tell you more about it to-morrow if it will interest you."

"By all means. I am quite excited about it. It's a good thing, too, that you have settled down to a definite piece of work again."

"Yes, my dear George, I don't like being quite alone, and must create some society for myself as quickly as possible, people I choose myself... otherwise, any one who wants to come along, and one is not keen on being at home to every chance ghost."

George told him that he had called on Leo and found him in far better spirits than he had ever expected.

Heinrich leaned against the secretary with both his hands buried in his trouser pockets and his head slightly bent; the shaded lamp made uncertain shadows on his face. "Why didn't you expect to find him in good spirits? If it had been us... if it had been me, at any rate, I should probably have felt exactly the same."

George was sitting on the arm of a black leather arm-chair with crossed legs and his hat and stick in his hand. "Perhaps you are right," he said, "but I must confess all the same that when I saw his cheerful face I found it very strange to realise that he had a human life on his conscience."

"You mean," said Heinrich, beginning to walk up and down the room, "that it is one of those cases where the relationship of cause and effect is so illuminating that you are justified in saying quietly 'he has killed' without its looking like a mere juggle of words.... But speaking generally, George, don't you think that we regard these matters a little superficially? We must see the flash of a dagger or hear the whistle of a bullet in order to realise that a murder has been committed. As though any man who let any one else die would be in most cases different from a murderer in anything else except having managed the business more comfortably and being more of a coward...."

"Are you really reproaching yourself, Heinrich? If you had really believed that it was bound to turn out like that... I am sure you would not have... let her die."

"Perhaps... I don't know. But I can tell you one thing, George: if she were still alive — I mean if I had forgiven her, to use the expression you are so fond of using now and then — I should regard myself as guiltier than I do to-day. Yes, yes, that's how it is. I will confess to you, George, there was a night... there were a few nights, when I was practically crushed by grief, by despair, by.... Other people would have taken it for remorse, but it was nothing of the kind. For amid all my grief, all my despair, I knew quite well that this death meant a kind of redemption, a kind of reconciliation, a kind of cleanness. If I had been weak or less vain... as you no doubt regard it... if she had been my mistress again, something far worse than that death would have happened for her as well... loathing and anguish, rage and hate, would have crawled around our bed... our memories would have rotted bit by bit — why, our love would have decomposed whilst its body was still alive. It had no right to be. It would have been a crime to have protracted the life of this love affair which was

sick unto death, just as it is a crime — and what is more, will be regarded so in the future — to protract the life of a man who is doomed to a painful death. Any sensible doctor will tell you as much. And that is why I'm very far from reproaching myself. I don't want to justify myself before you or before any one else in the world, but that is just how it is. I *can't* feel guilty. I often feel very bad, but that hasn't the least thing in the world to do with any consciousness of guilt."

"You went there just afterwards?" asked George.

"Yes, I went there. I even stood by when they lowered the coffin into the ground. Yes, I trained there with the mother." He stood by the window, quite in the darkness, and shook himself. "No, I shall never forget it. Besides, it is only a lie to say that people come together in a common sorrow. People never come together if they're not natural affinities. They feel even further away from each other in times of trouble. That journey! When I remember it! I read nearly the whole time, too. I found it positively intolerable to talk to the silly old creature. There is no one one hates more than some one who is quite indifferent to you and requires your sympathy. We stood together by her grave, too, the mother and I — I, the mother, and a few actors from the little theatre.... And afterwards I sat in the inn with her alone, after the funeral — a *tête-à-tête* wake. A desperate business, I can tell you. Do you know, by-the-by, where she lies buried? By your lake, George. Yes. I have often found myself driven to think of you. You know of course where the churchyard is? Scarcely a hundred yards from Auhof. There's a delightful view on to our lake, George; of course, only if one happens to be alive."

George felt a slight horror. He got up. "I am afraid I must leave you, Heinrich. I am expected. You'll excuse me?"

Heinrich came up to him out of the darkness of the window. "Thank you very much for your visit. Well, to-morrow, isn't it? I suppose you are going to Anna now? Please give her my best wishes. I hear she is very well. Therese told me."

"Yes, she looks splendid. She has completely recovered."

"I'm very glad. Well, till to-morrow then. I'm extremely glad that I shall be able to see you again before you leave. You must still have all kinds of things to tell me. I've done nothing again but talk about myself."

George smiled. As though he hadn't grown used to this with Heinrich. "Good-bye," he said, and went.

Much of what Heinrich had said echoed in George's mind when he sat again in his fiacre. "We must see the flash of a dagger in order to realise that a murder has been committed." George felt that there was a kind of subterranean connection, but yet one which he had guessed for a long time, between the meaning of these words and a certain dull sense of discomfort which he had frequently felt in his own soul. He thought of a past hour when he had felt as though a gamble over his unborn child was going on in the clouds, and it suddenly struck him as strange that Anna had not yet spoken a word to him about the child's death, that she had even avoided in her letters any reference, not only to the final misfortune, but also to the whole period when she had carried the child under her bosom.

The conveyance approached its destination. Why is my heart beating? thought George. Joy?... Bad conscience?... Why to-day all of a sudden? She can't have any grievance against me.... What nonsense! I am run down and excited at the same time, that's what it is. I shouldn't have come here at all. Why have I seen all these people again? Wasn't I a thousand times better off in the little town where I had started a new life, in spite of all my longings?... I ought to have met Anna somewhere else. Perhaps she will come away with me.... Then everything will still come right in the end. But is anything wrong?... Are our relations really in a bad way? And is it a crime to prolong them?... That may be a convenient excuse on certain occasions.

When he went into Rosners' the mother, who was sitting alone at the table, looked up from her book and

shut it with a snap. The light of a lamp that was swinging gently to and fro flowed from overhead on to the table, distributing itself equally in all directions. Josef got up from a corner of the sofa. Anna, who had just come out of her room, stroked her high wavy hair with both hands, welcomed George with a light nod of the head and gave him at this moment the impression of being rather an apparition than real flesh and blood. George shook hands with every one and inquired after Herr Rosner's health.

"He is not exactly bad," said Frau Rosner, "but he finds it difficult to stand up."

Josef apologised at being found sleeping on the sofa. He had to use the Sunday in order to rest himself. He was occupying a position on his paper which often kept him there till three o'clock in the morning.

"He is working very hard now," said his mother corroboratively.

"Yes," said Josef modestly, "when a fellow gets real scope, so to speak...." He went on to observe that the *Christliche Volksbote* was enjoying a larger and larger circulation, particularly in Germany. He then addressed some questions to George about his new home, and showed a keen interest in the population, the condition of the roads, the popularity of cycling and the surrounding neighbourhood.

Frau Rosner, on her side, made polite inquiries about the composition of the repertoire. George supplied the information and a conversation was soon in progress, in which Anna also played a substantial part, and George found himself suddenly paying a visit to a middle-class and conventional family where the daughter of the house happened to be musical. The conversation finally finished up in George feeling himself bound to express a wish to hear the young lady sing once more — and he had as it were to pull himself together to realise that the woman whose voice he had asked to hear was really his own Anna.

Josef made his excuses; he was called away by an appointment with club friends in the café. "Do you still remember, Herr Baron... the classy party on the Sophienalp?"

"Of course," replied George, smiling, and he quoted: "Der Gott, der Eisen wachsen liess...."

"Der wollte keine Knechte," added Josef. "But we have left off singing that now for a long time. It is too like the 'Watch on the Rhine,' and we don't want to have it cast in our teeth any more that we have a sneaking fancy for the other side of the frontier. We had great fights about it on the committee. One gentleman even sent in his resignation. He's a solicitor, you know, in the office of Doctor Fuchs, the National German Deputy. Yes, it's all politics, you know." He winked. They must not think, of course, that now that he himself had an insight into the machinery of public life he still took the swindle seriously. With the scarcely surprising remark that he could tell a tale or two if he wanted, he took his leave. Frau Rosner thought it time to go and look after her husband.

George sat alone with Anna, opposite her by the round table, over which the hanging lamp shed its light.

"Thank you for the beautiful roses," said Anna. "I have them inside in my room." She got up, and George followed her. He had quite forgotten that he had sent her any flowers. They were standing in a high glass in front of the mirror. They were dark red and their reflection was opaque and colourless. The piano was open, some music stood ready and two candles were burning at the side. Apart from that all the light in the room was what came from the adjoining apartment through the wide opening left by the door.

"You've been playing, Anna?" He came nearer. "The Countess's Aria? Been singing, too?"

"Yes — tried to."

"All right?"

"It is beginning to... I think so. Well, we'll see. But first tell me what you have been doing all to-day."

"In a minute. We haven't welcomed each other at all so far." He embraced and kissed her.

"It is a long time since — —" she said, smiling past him.

"Well?" he asked keenly, "are you coming with me?"

Anna hesitated. “But what do you really think of doing, George?”

“Quite simple. We can go away to-morrow afternoon. You can choose the place. Reichenau, Semmering, Brühl, anywhere you like.... And I’ll bring you back in the morning the day after to-morrow.” Something or other kept him back from mentioning the telegram which gave him three whole days to do what he liked with.

Anna looked in front of her. “It would be very nice,” she said tonelessly, “but it really won’t be possible, George.”

“On account of your father?”

She nodded.

“But he is surely better, isn’t he?”

“No, he is not at all well. He is so weak. They wouldn’t of course reproach me directly in any way. But I... I can’t leave mother alone now, for that kind of excursion.”

He shrugged his shoulders, feeling slightly wounded at the designation which she had chosen.

“Come, be frank,” she added in a jesting manner. “Are you really so keen on it?”

He shook his head, almost as if in pain, but he felt that this gesture also was lacking in sincerity. “I don’t understand you, Anna,” he said, more weakly than he really meant. “To think that a few weeks of being away from each other, to think of... well, I don’t know what to call it.... It is as though we had got absolutely out of touch. It’s really me, Anna, it’s really me....” he repeated in a vehement but tired voice. He got up from the chair in front of the piano. He took her hands and put them to his lips, feeling nervous and somewhat moved.

“What was *Tristan* like?” she inquired.

He gave her a conscientious account of the performance and did not leave out his visit to the Ehrenbergs’ box. He spoke of all the people whom he had seen and conveyed to her Heinrich Bermann’s wishes. He then drew her on to his knee and kissed her. When he removed his face from hers he saw tears running over her cheeks. He pretended to be surprised, “What’s the matter, child?... But why, why...?”

She got up and went to the window with her face turned away from him.

He stood up too, feeling somewhat impatient, walked up and down the room once or twice, then went up to her, pressed her close to him, and then immediately began again in great haste: “Anna, just think it over and see if you really can’t come with me! It would all be so different from what it is here. We could really talk things over thoroughly. We have got such important matters to discuss. I need your advice as well, about the plans I am to make for next year. I’ve written to you about it, haven’t I? It is very probable, you see, that I shall be asked to sign a three years’ contract in the next few days.”

“What am I to advise you?” she said. “After all, you know best whether it suits you there or not.”

He began to tell her about the kind and talented manager who clearly wished to have him for a collaborator; about the old and sympathetic conductor who had once been so famous; about a very diminutive stage-hand who was called Alexander the Great; about a young lady with whom he had studied the Micaela, and who was engaged to a Berlin doctor; and about a tenor, who had already been working at the theatre for twenty-seven years and hated Wagner violently. He then began to talk about his own personal prospects, artistic and financial. There was no doubt that he could soon attain an excellent and assured position at the little Court Theatre. On the other hand one had to bear in mind that it was dangerous to bind oneself for too long; a career like that of the old conductor would not be to his taste. Of course... temperaments varied. He for his part believed himself safe from a fate like that.

Anna looked at him all the time, and finally said in a half jesting, half meditative tone, as though she were speaking to a child: “Yes, isn’t he trying hard?”

The thrust went home. “In what way am I trying hard?”

“Look here, George, you don’t owe me explanations of any kind.”

“Explanations? But you are really.... Really, I’m not giving you any explanations, Anna. I’m simply describing to you how I live and what kind of people I have to deal with... because I flatter myself that these things interest you, in the same way that I told you where I had been yesterday and to-day.”

She was silent, and George felt again that she did not believe him, that she was justified in not believing him — even though now and again the truth happened to come from his lips. All kinds of words were on the tip of his tongue, words of wounded pride, of rage, of gentle persuasion — each seemed to him equally worthless and empty. He made no reply, sat down at the piano and gently struck some notes and chords. He now felt again as though he loved her very much and was simply unable to tell it her, and as though this hour of meeting would have been quite different if they had celebrated it elsewhere. Not in this room, not in this town; in a place, for preference, which they neither of them knew, in a new strange environment, yes, then perhaps everything would have been again just as it had been once before. Then they would have been able to have rushed into each other’s arms — as once before, with real yearning, and found delight — and peace. The idea occurred to him: “If I were to say to her now ‘Anna! Three days and three nights belong to us!’ If I were to beg her... with the right words.... Entreat her at her feet.... ‘Come with me, come!’... She would not hold out long! She would certainly follow me....” He knew it. Why did he not speak the right words? Why did he not entreat her? Why was he silent, as he sat at the piano and gently struck notes and chords...? Why?... Then he felt her soft hand upon his head. His fingers lay heavy on the notes, some chord or other vibrated. He did not dare to turn round. She knows it, too, he felt. What does she know?... Is it true, then...? Yes... it is true. And he thought of the hour after the birth of his dead child — when he had sat by her bed and she had lain there in silence, with her looks turned towards the gloomy garden.... She had known it even then — earlier than he — that all was over. And he lifted his hands from the piano, took hers, which were still lying on his head, guided them to his cheeks, drew her to him till she was again quite close, and she slowly dropped down on to his knees. And he began again, shyly: “Anna... perhaps... you could manage to.... Perhaps I too could manage for a few days’ more leave if I were to telegraph. Anna dear... just listen.... It would be really so beautiful....” A plan came to him from the very depths of his consciousness. If he really were to go travelling with her for some days, and were to take the opportunity honestly to say to her, “It must end, Anna, but the end of our love must be beautiful like the beginning was. Not dim and gloomy like these hours in your people’s house....” If I were honestly to say that to her — somewhere in the country — would it not be more worthy of her and mine — and our past happiness...? And with this plan in his mind he grew more insistent, bolder, almost passionate.... And his words had the same ring again as they had had a long, long time ago.

Sitting on his knees, with her arms around his neck, she answered gently: “George, I am not — going to go through it another time....”

He already had a word upon his lips with which he could have dissipated her alarm. But he kept it back, for if put in so many words it would have simply meant that while he was thinking of course of living again a few hours of delight with her, he did not feel inclined to take any responsibility upon himself. He felt it. All he need say to avoid wounding her was this one thing: “You belong to me for ever! — You really must have a child by me — I’ll fetch you at Christmas or Easter at the outside. And we will never be parted from each other any more.” He felt the way in which she waited for these words with one last hope, with a hope in whose realisation she had herself ceased to believe. But he was silent. If he had said aloud the words she was yearning for he would have bound himself anew, and... he now realised more deeply than he had ever realised before that he wanted to be free.

She was still resting on his knees, with her cheek leaning on his. They were silent for a long time and knew

that this was the farewell. Finally George said resolutely: “Well, if you don’t want to come with me, Anna, then I’ll go straight back — to-morrow, and we’ll see each other again in the spring. Until then there are only letters. Only in the event of my coming at Christmas if I can....”

She had got up and was leaning against the piano. “The boy’s mad again,” she said. “Isn’t it really better if we don’t see each other till after Easter?”

“Why better?”

“By then — everything will be so much clearer.”

He tried to misunderstand her. “You mean about the contract?”

“Yes....”

“I must make up my mind in the next few weeks. The people want of course to know where they are. On the other hand, even if I did sign for three years, and other chances came along, they wouldn’t keep me against my will. But up to the present it really seems to me that staying in that small town has been an extremely sound thing for me. I have never been able to work with such concentration as there. Haven’t I written to you how I have often sat at my secretary after the theatre till three o’clock in the morning, and woken up fresh at eight o’clock after a sound sleep?”

She gazed at him all the time with a look at once pained and reflective, which affected him like a look of doubt. Had she not once believed in him! Had she not spoken those words of trust and tenderness to him in a twilight church: “I will pray to Heaven that you become a great artist”? He felt again as though she did not think anything like as much of him as in days gone by. He felt troubled and asked her uncertainly: “You’ll allow me, of course, to send you my violin sonata as soon as it is finished? You know I don’t value anybody else’s criticism as much as I do yours.” And he thought: If I could only just keep her as a friend... or win her over again... as a friend... is it possible?

She said: “You have also spoken to me about a few new fantasies you have written just for the pianoforte.”

“Quite right; but they are not yet quite ready. But there’s another one which I... which I...” he himself found his hesitations foolish— “composed last summer by the lake where that poor girl was drowned, Heinrich’s mistress you know, which you don’t know yet either. Couldn’t I... I’ll play it to you quite gently; would you like me to?”

She nodded and shut the door. There, just behind him, she stood motionless as he began.

And he played. He played the little piece with all its passionate melancholy which he had composed by that lake of his, when Anna and the child had been completely forgotten. It was a great relief to him that he could play it to her. She must be bound to understand the message of these notes. It was impossible for her not to understand. He heard himself as it were speaking in the notes; he felt as though it was only now that he understood himself. Farewell, my love, farewell. It was very beautiful. And now it is over... farewell, my love.... We have lived through what was fated for both of us. And whatever the future may hold for me and for you we shall always mean something to each other which we can neither of us ever forget. And now my life goes another way.... And yours too. It must be over... I have loved you. I kiss your eyes.... I thank you, you kind, gentle, silent one. Farewell, my love... farewell.... The notes died away. He had not looked up from the keys while he was playing: he now turned slowly round. She stood behind him solemn and with lips which quivered slightly. He caught her hands and kissed them. “Anna, Anna...” he exclaimed. He felt as if his heart would break.

“Don’t quite forget me,” she said softly.

“I’ll write to you as soon as I’m there again.”

She nodded.

“And you’ll write to me, too, Anna... everything... everything... you understand?”

She nodded again.

“And... and... I’ll see you again early to-morrow.”

She shook her head. He wanted to make some reply as though he were astonished — as if it were really a matter of course that he should see her again before his departure. She lightly lifted her hand as though requesting him to be silent. He stood up, pressed her to him, kissed her mouth, which was cool and did not answer his kiss, and left the room. She stayed behind standing with limp arms and shut eyes. He hurried down the stairs. He felt down below in the street as though he must go up again — and say to her: “But it’s all untrue! That was not our goodbye. I really do love you. I belong to you. It can’t be over....”

But he felt that he ought not to. Not yet. Perhaps to-morrow. She would not escape him between this evening and to-morrow morning... and he rushed aimlessly about the empty streets as though in a slight delirium of grief and freedom. He was glad he had made no appointments with any one and could remain alone. He dined somewhere far off in an old low smoky inn in a silent corner while people from another world sat at the neighbouring tables, and it seemed to him that he was in a foreign town: lonely, a little proud of his loneliness and a little frightened of his pride.

The following day George was walking with Heinrich about noon through the avenues of the Dornbacher Park. An air which was heavy with thin clouds enveloped them, the sodden leaves crackled and slid underneath their feet, and through the shrubbery there glistened that very road on which they had gone the year before towards the reddish-yellow hill. The branches spread themselves out without stirring, as though oppressed by the distant sultriness of the greyish sun.

Heinrich was just describing the end of his drama, which had occurred to him yesterday. Ägidius had been landed on the island ready after his death-journey to undergo within seven days his foretold doom. The prince gives him his life. Ägidius does not take it and throws himself from the cliffs into the sea.

George was not satisfied: “Why must Ägidius die?” He did not believe in it.

Heinrich could not understand the necessity for any explanation at all. “Why, how can he go on living?” he exclaimed. “He was doomed to death. It was with his hand before his eyes that he lived the most splendid, the most glorious days that have ever been vouchsafed to man as the uncontrolled lord upon the ship, the lover of the Princess, the friend of the sages, singers and star-gazers, but always with the end before his eyes. All this richness would, so to speak, lose its point: why, his sublime and majestic expectation of his last minute would be bound to become transformed in Ägidius’s memory into a ridiculous dupe’s fear of death, if all this death-journey were to turn out in the end to be an empty joke. That’s why he must die.”

“Then you think it’s true?” asked George, with even greater doubt than before. “I can’t help it — I don’t.”

“That doesn’t matter,” replied Heinrich. “If you thought it true now, things would be too easy for me. But it would have become true as soon as the last syllable of my piece is written. Or....” He did not go on speaking. They walked up a meadow, and soon the expanse of the familiar valley spread out at their feet. The Sommerhaidenweg gleamed on the hill-slope on their right, on the other side hard by the forest the yellow-painted inn was visible with its red wooden terraces, and not far off was the little house with the dark grey gable. The town could be descried in an uncertain haze, the plain floated still further towards the heights and far in the distance loomed the pale low drawn outlines of the mountains. They now had to cross a broad highway and at last a footpath took them down over the fields and meadows. Remote on either side slumbered the forest.

George felt a presentiment of the yearning with which in the years to come, perhaps on the very next day, he would miss this landscape which had now ceased being his home.

At last they stood in front of the little house with the gable which George had wanted to see one last time. The door and windows were boarded up; battered by the weather, as though grown old before its time, it stood there and had no truck with the world.

"Well, so this is what is called saying goodbye," said George lightly. His look fell upon the clay figure in the middle of the faded flower-beds. "Funny," he said to Heinrich, "that I've always taken the blue boy for an angel. I mean I called him that, for I knew, of course, all the time what he looked like and that he was really a curly-headed boy with bare feet, tunic and girdle."

"You will swear a year from to-day," said Heinrich, "that the blue boy had wings."

George threw a glance up to the attic. He felt as though there existed a possibility of some one suddenly coming out on the balcony: perhaps Labinski who had paid him no visits since that dream; or he himself, the George von Wergenthin of days gone by; the George of that summer who had lived up there. Silly fancies. The balcony remained empty, the house was silent and the garden was deep asleep. George turned away disappointed. "Come," he said to Heinrich. They went and took the road to the Sommerhaidenweg.

"How warm it's grown!" said Heinrich, took off his overcoat and threw it over his shoulder, as was his habit.

George felt a desolate and somewhat arid sense of remembrance. He turned to Heinrich: "I'd prefer to tell you straight away. The affair is over."

Heinrich threw him a quick side-glance and then nodded, not particularly surprised.

"But," added George, with a weak attempt at humour, "you are earnestly requested not to think of the angel boy."

Heinrich shook his head seriously. "Thank you. You can dedicate the fable of the blue boy to Nürnberger."

"He's turned out right, once again," said George.

"He always turns out right, my dear George. One can positively never be deceived if one mistrusts everything in the world, even one's own scepticism. Even if you had married Anna he would have turned out right... or at any rate you would have thought so. But at any rate I think... you don't mind my saying so, I suppose... it's sound that it's turned out like this."

"Sound? I've no doubt it is for me," replied George with intentional sharpness, as though he were very far from having any idea of sparing his conduct. "It was perhaps even a duty, in your sense of the term, Heinrich, which I owed to myself to bring it to an end."

"Then it was certainly equally your duty to Anna," said Heinrich.

"That remains to be seen. Who knows if I have not spoilt her life?"

"Her life? Do you still remember Leo Golowski saying about her that she was fated to finish up in respectable life? Do you think, George, that a marriage with you would have been particularly respectable? Anna was perhaps cut out to be your mistress — not your wife. Who knows if the fellow she is going to marry one day or other wouldn't really have every reason to be grateful to you if only men weren't so confoundedly silly? People only have pure memories when they have lived through something — this applies to women quite as much as men."

They walked further along the Sommerhaidenweg in the direction of the town, which towered out of the grey haze, and approached the cemetery.

"Is there really any point," asked George hesitatingly, "in visiting the grave of a creature that has never lived?"

"Does your child lie there?"

George nodded. His child! How strange it always sounded! They walked along the brown wooden palings

above which rose the gravestones and crosses, and then followed a low brick wall to the entrance. An attendant of whom they inquired showed them the way over the wide centre path which was planted with willows. There were rows of little oval plates, each one with two short prongs stuck into the ground, on little mounds like sand-castles, close to the planks in a fairly large plot of ground. The mound for which George was looking lay in the middle of the field. Dark red roses lay on it. George recognised them. His heart stood still. What a good thing, he thought, that we didn't meet each other! Did she hope to, I wonder?

"There where the roses are?" asked Heinrich.

George nodded.

They remained silent for a while. "Isn't it a fact," asked Heinrich, "that during the whole time you never once thought of the possibility of its ending like this?"

"Never? I don't quite know. All kinds of possibilities run through one's mind. But of course I never seriously thought of it. Besides, how could one?" He told Heinrich, and not for the first time, of how the Professor had explained the child's death. It had been an unfortunate accident through which one to two per cent. of unborn children were bound to perish. As to why this accident should have taken place in this particular case, that, of course, the Professor had not been able to explain. But was accident anything more than a word? Was not even that accident bound to have its cause?

Heinrich shrugged his shoulders. "Of course.... One cause after the other and its final cause in the beginning of all things. We could of course prevent the happening of many so-called accidents if we had more perception, more knowledge and more power. Who knows if your child's death could not have been prevented at some moment or other?"

"And perhaps it may have been in my own power," said George slowly.

"I don't understand. Was there any premonitory symptom or...."

George stood there staring fixedly at the little mound. "I'll ask you something, Heinrich, but don't laugh at me. Do you think it possible that an unborn child can die from one not longing for it to come, in the way one ought to — dying, as it were, of too little love?"

Heinrich put his hand on his shoulder. "George, how does a sensible man like you manage to get hold of such metaphysical ideas?"

"You can call it whatever you like, metaphysical or silly; for some time past I haven't been able to shake off the thought that to some extent I bear the blame for it having ended like that."

"You?"

"If I said a minute ago that I did not long for it enough I didn't express myself properly. The truth is this: that I had quite forgotten that little creature that was to have come into the world. In the last few weeks immediately before its birth, especially, I had absolutely forgotten it. I can't put it any differently. Of course I knew all the time what was going to happen, but it didn't concern me, as it were. I went on with my life without thinking of it. Not the whole time, but frequently, and particularly in the summer by the lake, my lake as you call it... then I was.... Yes, when I was there I simply knew nothing about my going to have a child."

"I've heard all about it," said Heinrich, looking past him.

George looked at him. "You know what I mean then? I was not only far away from the child, the unborn child, but from the mother too, and in so strange a way that with the best will in the world I can't describe it to you, can't even understand it myself to-day. And there are moments when I can't resist the thought that there must have been some connection between that forgetting and my child's death. Do you think anything like that so absolutely out of the question?"

Heinrich's forehead was furrowed deeply. "Quite out of the question? one can't go as far as that. The roots

of things are often so deeply intertwined that we find it impossible to look right down to the bottom. Yes, perhaps there even are connections like that. But even if there are... they are not for you, George! Even if such connections did exist they wouldn't count so far as you were concerned."

"Wouldn't count for me?"

"The whole idea which you just tell me, well, it doesn't fit in with my conception of you. It doesn't come out of your soul. Not a bit of it. An idea of that kind would never have occurred to you your whole life long if you hadn't been intimate with a person of my type, and if it hadn't been your way sometimes not to think your own thoughts but those of men who were stronger — or even weaker than you are. And I assure you, whatever turn your life may have taken even down by that lake, your lake... our lake... you haven't incurred any so-called guilt. It might have been guilt in the case of some one else. But with a man like you whose character — you don't mind my saying this — is somewhat frivolous and a little unconscientious there would certainly be no sense of guilt. Shall I tell you something? As a matter of fact you don't feel guilty about the child at all, but the discomfort which you feel only comes from your thinking yourself under an obligation to feel guilty. Look here, if I had gone through anything like your adventure I might perhaps have been guilty because I might possibly have felt myself guilty."

"Would you have been guilty in a case like mine, Heinrich?"

"No, perhaps I wouldn't. How can I know? You're probably now thinking of the fact that I recently drove a creature straight to her death and in spite of that felt, so to speak, quite guiltless."

"Yes, that's what I'm thinking of. And that's why I don't understand...."

Heinrich shrugged his shoulders. "Yes. I felt quite guiltless. Somewhere or other in my soul and somewhere else, perhaps deeper down, I felt guilty.... And deeper down still, guiltless again. The only question is how deep we look down into ourselves. And when we have lit the lights in all the storeys, why, we are everything at the same time: guilty and guiltless, cowards and heroes, fools and wise men. 'We' — perhaps that's putting it rather too generally. In your case, for example, George, there are far less of these complications, at any rate when you're outside the influence of the atmosphere which I sometimes spread around you. That's why, too, you are better off than I am — much better off. My look-out is ghastly, you know. You surely must have noticed it before. What's the good to me of the lights burning in all my storeys? What's the good to me of my knowledge of human nature and my splendid intelligence? Nothing.... Less than nothing. As a matter of fact there's nothing I should like better, George, than that all the ghastly events of the last months had not happened, just like a bad dream. I swear to you, George, I would give my whole future and God knows what if I could make it undone. But if it were undone... then I should probably be quite as miserable as I am now."

His face became distorted as though he wanted to scream. But immediately afterwards he stood there again, stiff, motionless, pale, as though all his fire had gone out. And he said: "Believe me, George, there are moments when I envy the people with a so-called philosophy of life. As for me, whenever I want to have a decently ordered world I have always first got to create one for myself. That's rather a strain for any one who doesn't happen to be the Deity."

He sighed heavily. George left off answering him. He walked with him under the willows to the exit. He knew that there was no help for this man. It was fated that some time or other he should precipitate himself into the void from the top of a tower which he had circled up in spirals; and that would be the end of him. But George felt in good form and free. He made the resolve to use the three days which still belonged to him as sensibly as possible. The best thing to do was to be alone in some quiet beautiful country-side, to rest himself fully and recuperate for new work. He had taken the manuscript of the violin sonata with him to Vienna. He

was thinking of finishing that before all others.

They crossed the doorway and stood in the street. George turned round, but the cemetery wall arrested his gaze. It was only after a few steps that he had a clear view of the valley. All he could do now was to guess where the little house with the grey gables was lying; it was no longer visible from here. Beyond the reddish-yellow hills which shut off the view of the landscape the sky sank down in the faint autumn light. A gentle farewell was taking place within George's soul of much happiness and much sorrow, the echoes of which he heard as it were in the valley which he was now leaving for a long time; and at the same time there was within his soul the greeting of days as yet unknown, which rang to his youth from out the wideness of the world.

Casanova's Homecoming (1918)

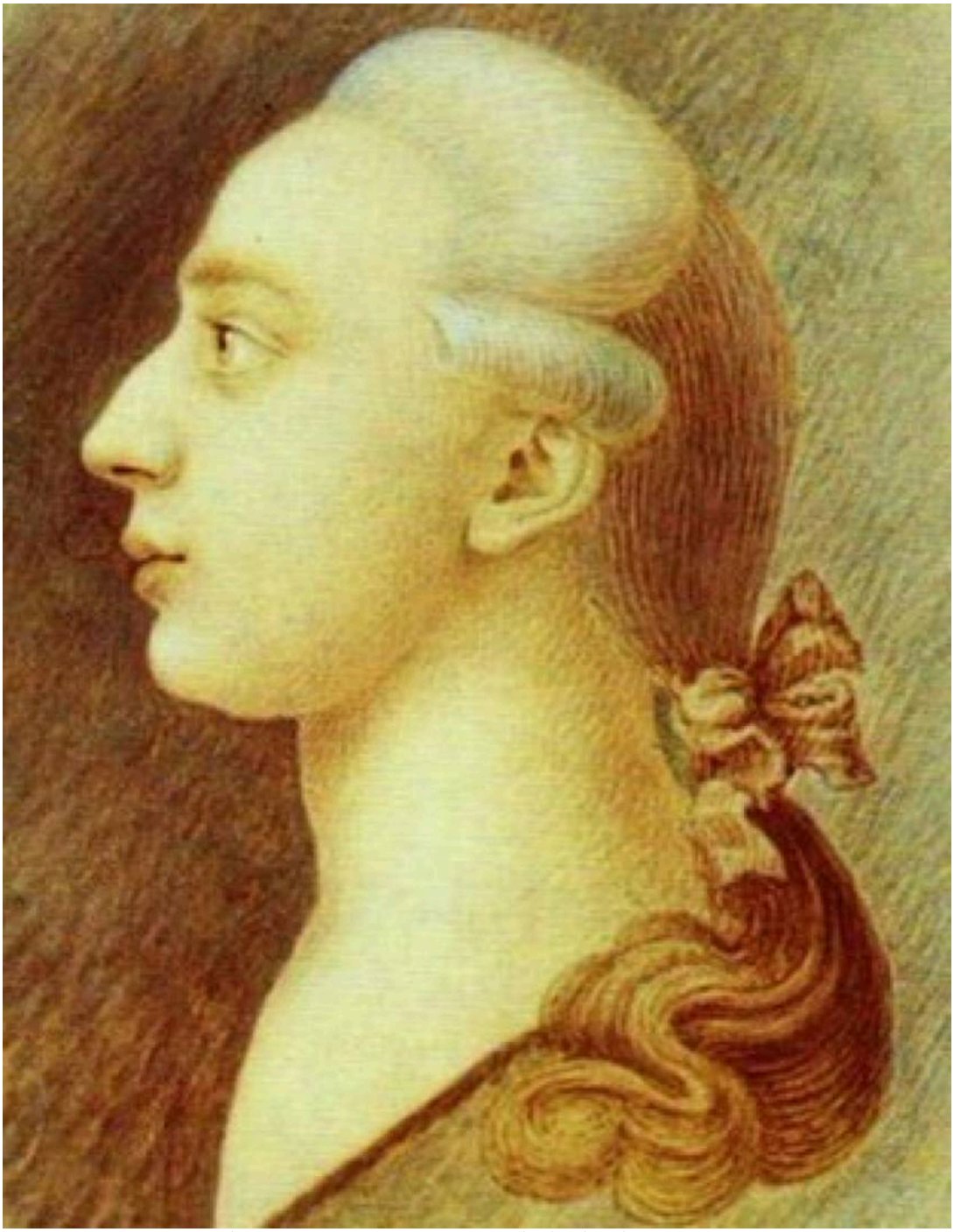
Original German Title: 'Casanovas Heimfahrt'

Translated by Eden and Cedar Paul, 1922

This novel first appeared in the Berlin literary journal *Die Neue Rundschau* in the summer of 1918, with the book edition being published by S. Fischer in the August of the same year. The story revolves around the famed libertine Giacomo Casanova, who, now 53 years old and yearning for his native Venice, grapples with feelings of nostalgia and restlessness as he contemplates returning home after years of exile. Giacomo Casanova (1725-1798) had been an Italian adventurer and writer, who was born in the Republic of Venice and travelled extensively throughout Europe. He is chiefly remembered for his autobiography, written in French and published posthumously as *Histoire de ma vie* (The Story of My Life). It has come to be regarded as a unique and provocative source of information on the customs and norms of European social life in the eighteenth century.

It is the year 1778 and Casanova waits in Mantua for news from Venice. The Council of Ten is to end the 25-year exile of the now impoverished Venetian from his native city. While waiting, Casanova meets his friend Olivo, who lives in modest comfort. Casanova once had an affair with Olivo's wife, Amalia, now the mother of three young daughters. Amalia still loves Casanova and wants to rekindle the affair. However, Casanova wants to seduce the young Marcolina, Olivo's very young niece. Amalia tries to dissuade him, claiming that the young, handsome Lieutenant Lorenzi is Marcolina's lover. However, Casanova knows better. Lorenzi has been rejected by Marcolina. The girl is studying mathematics in Bologna and is spending her holidays with relatives. Casanova, who is currently trying to gain literary fame with a polemical essay against Voltaire, finds in the beautiful and learned Marcolina a philosophically astute opponent, whose intellect is captivating...

Although in real life Casanova did visit Voltaire in Ferney and the seducer did indeed serve as a spy for Venice, even in his sixth decade, the entire novella is a fabrication. In response to a critique of the book by his sister-in-law, Schnitzler noted in his diary: "To them, telling a story now means being convoluted. Expressionist delusion!—"



A drawing of Giacomo Casanova by his brother Francesco

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CHAPTER ONE.



CASANOVA WAS IN his fifty-third year. Though no longer driven by the lust of adventure that had spurred him in his youth, he was still hunted athwart the world, hunted now by a restlessness due to the approach of old age. His yearning for Venice, the city of his birth, grew so intense that, like a wounded bird slowly circling downwards in its death flight, he began to move in ever-narrowing circles. Again and again, during the last ten years of his exile, he had implored the Supreme Council for leave to return home. Erstwhile, in the drafting of these petitions — a work in which he was a past master — a defiant, wilful spirit seemed to have guided his pen; at times even he appeared to take a grim delight in his forwardness. But of late his requests had been couched in humble, beseeching words which displayed, ever more plainly, the ache of homesickness and genuine repentance.

The sins of his earlier years (the most unpardonable to the Venetian councillors was his free-thinking, not his dissoluteness, or quarrelsomeness, or rather sportive knavery) were by degrees passing into oblivion, and so Casanova had a certain amount of confidence that he would receive a hearing. The history of his marvellous escape from The Leads of Venice, which he had recounted on innumerable occasions at the courts of princes, in the palaces of nobles, at the supper tables of burghers, and in houses of ill fame, was beginning to make people forget any disrepute which had attached to his name. Moreover, in letters to Mantua, where he had been staying for two months, persons of influence had conveyed hope to the adventurer, whose inward and outward lustre were gradually beginning to fade, that ere long there would come a favorable turn in his fortunes.

Since his means were now extremely slender, Casanova had decided to await the expected pardon in the modest but respectable inn where he had stayed in happier years. To make only passing mention of less spiritual amusements, with which he could not wholly dispense — he spent most of his time in writing a polemic against the slanderer Voltaire, hoping that the publication of this document would serve, upon his return to Venice, to give him unchallenged position and prestige in the eyes of all well-disposed citizens.

One morning he went out for a walk beyond the town limits to excogitate the final touches for some sentences that were to annihilate the infidel Frenchman. Suddenly he fell prey to a disquiet that almost amounted to physical distress. He turned over in his mind the life he had been leading for the last three months. It had grown wearisomely familiar — the morning walks into the country, the evenings spent in gambling for petty stakes with the reputed Baron Perotti and the latter's pock-marked mistress. He thought of the affection lavished upon himself by his hostess, a woman ardent but no longer young. He thought of how he had passed his time over the writings of Voltaire and over the composition of an audacious rejoinder which until that moment had seemed to him by no means inadequate. Yet now, in the dulcet atmosphere of a morning in late summer, all these things appeared stupid and repulsive.

Muttering a curse without really knowing upon whose head he wished it to alight, gripping the hilt of his sword, darting angry glances in all directions as if invisible scornful eyes were watching him in the surrounding solitude, he turned on his heel and retraced his steps back to the town, determined to make arrangements that very hour for immediate departure. He felt convinced that a more genial mood would possess him were he to diminish even by a few miles the distance that separated him from the home for which he longed. It was necessary to hasten, so that he might be sure of booking a place in the diligence. It was to leave at eventide by the eastward road. There was little else to do, for he really need not bother to pay a

farewell visit to Baron Perotti. Half an hour would suffice for the packing of all his possessions. He thought of the two suits, the shabbier of which he was wearing at that moment; of the much darned, though once elegant, underlinen. With two or three snuffboxes, a gold watch and chain, and a few books, these comprised his whole worldly wealth. He called to mind past splendors, when he had travelled as a man of distinction, driving in a fine carriage; when he had been well furnished both with necessaries and with superfluities; when he had even had his own servingman — who had usually, of course, been a rogue. These memories brought impotent anger in their train, and his eyes filled with tears. A young woman drove towards him, whip in hand. In her little cart, amid sacks and various odds and ends, lay her husband, drunk and snoring. Casanova strode by beneath the chestnut trees that lined the highway, his face working with wrath, unintelligible phrases hissing from between his clenched teeth. The woman glanced at him inquisitively and mockingly at first, then, on encountering an angry glare, with some alarm, and finally, after she had passed, there was amorous invitation in the look she gave him over her shoulder. Casanova, who was well aware that rage and hatred can assume the semblance of youth more readily than can gentleness and amiability, was prompt to realize that a bold response on his part would bring the cart to a standstill, and that the young woman would be ready to give him any assignation he pleased. Nevertheless, although the recognition of this fact put him in a better humor for the nonce, it seemed hardly worth while to waste minutes upon so trivial an adventure. He was content, therefore, to allow the peasant woman to drive her cart and all its contents unimpeded through the dust of the roadway.

The sun was now high in the heavens, and the shade of the trees hardly tempered the heat. Casanova was soon compelled to moderate his pace.

Under the thick powder of dust the shabbiness of his garments was no longer apparent, so that by his dress and bearing he might easily have been taken for a gentleman of station who had been pleased for once in a way to walk instead of drive. He had almost reached the arched gateway near his inn, when he met a heavy country carriage lumbering along the road. In it was seated a stoutish man, well dressed, and still fairly young. His hands were clasped across his stomach, his eyelids drooped, and he seemed about to doze off, when of a sudden he caught sight of Casanova, and a great change took place in him. His whole aspect betrayed great excitement. He sprang to his feet, but too quickly, and fell back into his seat. Rising again, he gave the driver a punch in the back, to make the fellow pull up. But since the carriage did not stop instantly, the passenger turned round so as not to lose sight of Casanova, signalled with both hands, and finally called to him thrice by name, in a thin, clear voice. Not till he heard the voice, did Casanova recognize who it was. By now the carriage had stopped, and Casanova smilingly seized two hands outstretched towards him, saying:

“Olivo, is it really you?”

“Yes, Signor Casanova, it is I. You recognize me, then?”

“Why not? Since I last saw you, on your wedding day, you’ve put on flesh; but very likely I’ve changed a good deal, too, in these fifteen years, though not perhaps in the same fashion.”

“Not a bit of it,” exclaimed Olivo. “Why, Signor Casanova, you have hardly changed at all! And it is more than fifteen years; the sixteen years were up a few days ago. As you can imagine, Amalia and I had a good talk about you on the anniversary of our wedding.”

“Indeed?” said Casanova cordially. “You both think of me at times?”

The tears came to Olivo’s eyes. He was still holding Casanova’s hands, and he pressed them fondly.

“We have so much to thank you for, Signor Casanova. How could we ever forget our benefactor? Should we do so...”

“Don’t speak of it,” interrupted Casanova. “How is Signora Amalia? Do you know, I have been living in

Mantua three months, very quietly to be sure, but taking plenty of walks as I always have done. How is it, Olivo, that I never met you or your wife before?"

"The matter is simple, Signor Casanova. Both Amalia and I detest the town, and we gave up living there a long time ago. Would you do me the favor to jump in? We shall be at home in an hour."

Casanova tried to excuse himself, but Olivo insisted.

"I will take no denial. How delighted Amalia will be to see you once more, and how proud to show you our three children. Yes, we have three, Signor Casanova. All girls. Thirteen, ten, and eight — not one of them old enough yet — you'll excuse me, won't you — to have her head turned by Casanova."

He laughed good-humoredly, and made as if to help Casanova into the carriage. The latter shook his head. He had been tempted for a moment by natural curiosity to accept Olivo's invitation. Then his impatience returned in full force, and he assured his would-be host that unfortunately urgent business called him away from Mantua that very afternoon.

What could he expect to find in Olivo's house? Sixteen years were a long time! Amalia would be no younger and no prettier. At his age, a girl of thirteen would not find him interesting. Olivo, too, whom he had known in old days as a lean and eager student, was now a portly, countrified paterfamilias. The proposed visit did not offer sufficient attractions to induce Casanova to abandon a journey that was to bring him thirty or forty miles nearer to Venice.

Olivo, however, was disinclined to take no for an answer. Casanova must at least accept a lift back to the inn, a kindly suggestion that could not decently be refused. It was only a few minutes' drive. The hostess, a buxom woman in the middle thirties, welcomed Casanova with a glance that did not fail to disclose to Olivo the tender relationship between the pair. She shook hands with Olivo as an old acquaintance. She was a customer of Signor Olivo's, she explained to Casanova, for an excellent medium-dry wine grown on his estate.

Olivo hastened to announce that the Chevalier de Seingalt (the hostess had addressed Casanova by this title, and Olivo promptly followed suit) was so churlish as to refuse the invitation of an old friend, on the ridiculous plea that to-day of all days he had to leave Mantua. The woman's look of gloom convinced Olivo that this was the first she had heard of Casanova's intended departure, and the latter felt it desirable to explain that his mention of the journey had been a mere pretext, lest he should incommode his friend's household by an unexpected visit, and that he had, in fact, an important piece of writing to finish during the next few days, and no place was better suited for the work than the inn, where his room was agreeably cool and quiet.

Olivo protested that the Chevalier de Seingalt would do his modest home the greatest possible honor by finishing the work in question there. A change to the country could not but be helpful in such an undertaking. If Casanova should need learned treatises and works of reference, there would be no lack of them, for Olivo's niece, the daughter of a deceased half-brother, a girl who though young was extremely erudite, had arrived a few weeks before with a whole trunkful of books. Should any guests drop in at times of an evening, the Chevalier need not put himself about — unless, indeed, after the labors of the day, cheerful conversation or a game of cards might offer welcome distraction. Directly Casanova heard of the niece, he decided he would like to make her acquaintance, and after a show of further reluctance he yielded to Olivo's solicitation, declaring, however, that on no account would he be able to leave Mantua for more than a day or two. He begged the hostess to forward promptly by messenger any letters that should arrive during his absence, since they might be of the first importance.

Matters having thus been arranged to Olivo's complete satisfaction, Casanova went to his room, made ready for the journey, and returned to the parlor in a quarter of an hour. Olivo, meanwhile, had been having a

lively business talk with the hostess. He now rose, drank off his glass of wine, and with a significant wink promised to bring the Chevalier back, not perhaps to-morrow or the day after, but in any case in good order and condition. Casanova, however, had suddenly grown distrait and irritable. So cold was his farewell to the fond hostess that, at the carriage door, she whispered a parting word in his ear which was anything but amiable.

During the drive along the dusty road beneath the glare of the noonday sun, Olivo gave a garrulous and somewhat incoherent account of his life since the friends' last meeting. Shortly after his marriage he had bought a plot of land near the town, and had started in a small way as market gardener. Doing well at this trade, he had gradually been able to undertake more ambitious farming ventures. At length, under God's favor, and thanks to his own and his wife's efficiency, he had been able three years earlier to buy from the pecuniarily embarrassed Count Marazzani the latter's old and somewhat dilapidated country seat with a vineyard attached. He, his wife, and his children were comfortably settled upon this patrician estate, though with no pretence to patrician splendor. All these successes were ultimately due to the hundred and fifty gold pieces that Casanova had presented to Amalia, or rather to her mother. But for this magical aid, Olivo's lot would still have been the same. He would still have been giving instruction in reading and writing to ill-behaved youngsters. Most likely, he would have been an old bachelor and Amalia an old maid.

Casanova let him ramble on without paying much heed. The incident was one among many of the date to which it belonged. As he turned it over in his mind, it seemed to him the most trivial of them all, it had hardly even troubled the waters of memory.

He had been travelling from Rome to Turin or Paris — he had forgotten which. During a brief stay in Mantua, he caught sight of Amalia in church one morning. Pleased with her appearance, with her handsome but pale and somewhat woebegone face, he gallantly addressed her a friendly question. In those days everyone had been complaisant to Casanova. Gladly opening her heart to him, the girl told him that she was not well off; that she was in love with an usher who was likewise poor; that his father and her own mother were both unwilling to give their consent to so inauspicious a union. Casanova promptly declared himself ready to help matters on. He sought an introduction to Amalia's mother, a good-looking widow of thirty-six who was still quite worthy of being courted. Ere long Casanova was on such intimate terms with her that his word was law. When her consent to the match had been won, Olivo's father, a merchant in reduced circumstances, was no longer adverse, being specially influenced by the fact that Casanova (presented to him as a distant relative of the bride's mother) undertook to defray the expenses of the wedding and to provide part of the dowry. To Amalia, her generous patron seemed like a messenger from a higher world. She showed her gratitude in the manner prompted by her own heart. When, the evening before her wedding, she withdrew with glowing cheeks from Casanova's last embrace, she was far from thinking that she had done any wrong to her future husband, who after all owed his happiness solely to the amiability and open-handedness of this marvellous friend. Casanova had never troubled himself as to whether Amalia had confessed to Olivo the length to which she had gone in gratitude to her benefactor; whether, perchance, Olivo had taken her sacrifice as a matter of course, and had not considered it any reason for retrospective jealousy; or whether Olivo had always remained in ignorance of the matter. Nor did Casanova allow these questions to harass his mind to-day.

The heat continued to increase. The carriage, with bad springs and hard cushions, jolted the occupants abominably. Olivo went on chattering in his high, thin voice; talking incessantly of the fertility of his land, the excellencies of his wife, the good behavior of his children, and the innocent pleasures of intercourse with his neighbors — farmers and landed gentry. Casanova was bored. He began to ask himself irritably why on

earth he had accepted an invitation which could bring nothing but petty vexations, if not positive disagreeables. He thought longingly of the cool parlor in Mantua, where at this very hour he might have been working unhindered at his polemic against Voltaire. He had already made up his mind to get out at an inn now in sight, hire whatever conveyance might be available, and drive back to the town, when Olivo uttered a loud "Hullo!" A pony trap suddenly pulled up, and their own carriage came to a halt, as if by mutual understanding. Three young girls sprang out, moving with such activity that the knife-board on which they had been sitting flew into the air and was overturned.

"My daughters," said Olivo, turning to Casanova with a proprietary air.

Casanova promptly moved as if to relinquish his seat in the carriage.

"Stay where you are, my dear Chevalier," said Olivo. "We shall be at home in a quarter of an hour, and for that little while we can all make shift together. Maria, Nanetta, Teresina, this is the Chevalier de Seingalt, an old friend of mine. Shake hands with him. But for him you would...."

He broke off, and whispered to Casanova: "I was just going to say something foolish."

Amending his phrase, he said: "But for him, things would have been very different!"

Like their father, the girls had black hair and dark eyes. All of them including Teresina, the eldest, who was still quite the child, looked at the stranger with frank rustic curiosity. Casanova did not stand upon ceremony; he kissed each of the girls upon either cheek. Olivo said a word or two to the lad who was driving the trap in which the children had come, and the fellow whipped up the pony and drove along the road towards Mantua.

Laughing and joking, the girls took possession of the seat opposite Olivo and Casanova. They were closely packed; they all spoke at once; and since their father likewise went on talking, Casanova found it far from easy at first to follow the conversation. One name caught his ear, that of Lieutenant Lorenzi. Teresina explained that the Lieutenant had passed them on horseback not long before, had said he intended to call in the evening, and had sent his respects to Father. Mother had at first meant to come with them to meet Father, but as it was so frightfully hot she had thought it better to stay at home with Marcolina. As for Marcolina, she was still in bed when they left home. When they came along the garden path they had pelted her with hazel nuts through the open window, or she would still be asleep.

"That's not Marcolina's way," said Olivo to his guest. "Generally she is at work in the garden at six or even earlier, and sits over her books till dinner time. Of course we had visitors yesterday, and were up later than usual. We had a mild game of cards — not the sort of game you are used to, for we are innocent folk and don't want to win money from one another. Besides, our good Abbate usually takes a hand, so you can imagine, Chevalier, that we don't play for high stakes."

At the mention of the Abbate, the three girls laughed again, had an anecdote to tell, and this made them laugh more than ever. Casanova nodded amicably, without paying much attention. In imagination he saw Marcolina, as yet unknown to him, lying in her white bed, opposite the window. She had thrown off the bedclothes; her form was half revealed; still heavy with sleep she moved her hands to ward off the hail of nuts. His senses flamed. He was as certain that Marcolina and Lieutenant Lorenzi were in love with one another as if he had seen them in a passionate embrace. He was just as ready to detest the unknown Lorenzi as to long for the never seen Marcolina.

Through the shimmering haze of noon, a small, square tower now became visible, thrusting upward through the greyish-green foliage. The carriage turned into a by-road. To the left were vineyards rising on a gentle slope; to the right the crests of ancient trees showed above the wall of a garden. The carriage halted at a doorway in the wall. The weather-worn door stood wide. The passengers alighted, and at the master's nod the

coachman drove away to the stable. A broad path led through a chestnut avenue to the house, which at first sight had an almost neglected appearance. Casanova's attention was especially attracted by a broken window in the first story. Nor did it escape his notice that the battlements of the squat tower were crumbling in places. But the house door was gracefully carved; and directly he entered the hall it was plain that the interior was carefully kept, and was certainly in far better condition than might have been supposed from the outward aspect.

"Amalia," shouted Olivo, so loudly that the vaulted ceiling rang. "Come down as quickly as you can! I have brought a friend home with me, an old friend whom you'll be delighted to see!"

Amalia had already appeared on the stairs, although to most of those who had just come out of the glaring sunlight she was invisible in the twilit interior. Casanova, whose keen vision enabled him to see well even in the dark, had noted her presence sooner than Olivo. He smiled, and was aware that the smile made him look younger. Amalia had not grown fat, as he had feared. She was still slim and youthful. She recognized him instantly.

"What a pleasant surprise!" she exclaimed without the slightest embarrassment, hastening down the stairs, and offering her cheek to Casanova. The latter, nothing loath, gave her a friendly hug.

"Am I really to believe," said he, "that Maria, Nanetta, and Teresina are your very own daughters, Amalia? No doubt the passage of the years makes it possible...."

"And all the other evidence is in keeping," supplemented Olivo. "Rely upon that, Chevalier!"

Amalia let her eyes dwell reminiscently upon the guest. "I suppose," she said, "it was your meeting with the Chevalier that has made you so late, Olivo?"

"Yes, that is why I am late. But I hope there is still something to eat?"

"Marcolina and I were frightfully hungry, but of course we have waited dinner for you."

"Can you manage to wait a few minutes longer," asked Casanova, "while I get rid of the dust of the drive?"

"I will show you your room immediately," answered Olivo. "I do hope, Chevalier, you will find it to your taste; almost as much to your taste," he winked, and added in a low tone, "as your room in the inn at Mantua — though here one or two little things may be lacking."

He led the way upstairs into the gallery surrounding the hall. From one of the corners a narrow wooden stairway led into the tower. At the top, Olivo opened the door into the turret chamber, and politely invited Casanova to enter the modest guest chamber. A maidservant brought up the valise. Casanova was then left alone in a medium-sized room, simply furnished, but equipped with all necessaries. It had four tall and narrow bay-windows, commanding views to the four points of the compass, across the sunlit plain with its green vineyards, bright meadows, golden fields, white roads, light-colored houses, and dusky gardens. Casanova concerned himself little about the view, and hastened to remove the stains of travel, being impelled less by hunger than by an eager curiosity to see Marcolina face to face. He did not change, for he wished to reserve his best suit for evening wear.

CHAPTER TWO.



WHEN CASANOVA REENTERED the hall, a panelled chamber on the ground floor, there were seated at the well-furnished board, his host and hostess, their three daughters, and a young woman. She was wearing a simple grey dress of some shimmering material. She had a graceful figure. Her gaze rested on him as frankly and indifferently as if he were a member of the household, or had been a guest a hundred times before. Her face did not light up in the way to which he had grown accustomed in earlier years, when he had been a charming youth, or later in his handsome prime. But for a good while now Casanova had ceased to expect this from a new acquaintance. Nevertheless, even of late the mention of his name had usually sufficed to arouse on a woman's face an expression of tardy admiration, or at least some trace of regret, which was an admission that the hearer would have loved to meet him a few years earlier. Yet now, when Olivo introduced him to Marcolina as Signor Casanova, Chevalier de Seingalt, she smiled as she would have smiled at some utterly indifferent name that carried with it no aroma of adventure and mystery. Even when he took his seat by her side, kissed her hand, and allowed his eyes as they dwelt on her to gleam with delight and desire, her manner betrayed nothing of the demure gratification that might have seemed an appropriate answer to so ardent a wooing.

After a few polite commonplaces, Casanova told his neighbor that he had been informed of her intellectual attainments, and asked what was her chosen subject of study. Her chief interest, she rejoined, was in the higher mathematics, to which she had been introduced by Professor Morgagni, the renowned teacher at the university of Bologna. Casanova expressed his surprise that so charming a young lady should have an interest, certainly exceptional, in a dry and difficult subject. Marcolina replied that in her view the higher mathematics was the most imaginative of all the sciences; one might even say that its nature made it akin to the divine. When Casanova asked for further enlightenment upon a view so novel to him, Marcolina modestly declined to continue the topic, declaring that the others at table, and above all her uncle, would much rather hear some details of a newly recovered friend's travels than listen to a philosophical disquisition.

Amalia was prompt to second the proposal; and Casanova, always willing to oblige in this matter, said in easy-going fashion that during recent years he had been mainly engaged in secret diplomatic missions. To mention only places of importance, he had continually been going to and fro between Madrid, Paris, London, Amsterdam, and St. Petersburg. He gave an account of meetings and conversations, some grave and some gay, with men and women of all classes, and did not forget to speak of his friendly reception at the court of Catharine of Russia. He jestingly related how Frederick the Great had nearly appointed him instructor at a cadet school for Pomeranian junkers — a danger from which he had escaped by a precipitous flight. Of these and many other things he spoke as recent happenings, although in reality they had occurred years or decades before. Romancing freely, he was hardly conscious when he was lying either on a small scale or on a large, being equally delighted with his own conceits and with the pleasure he was giving to his auditors. While thus recounting real and imaginary incidents, he could almost delude himself into the belief that he was still the bold, radiant Casanova, the favorite of fortune and of beautiful women, the honored guest of secular and spiritual princes, the man whose spendings and gamblings and gifts must be reckoned in thousands. It was possible for him to forget that he was a decayed starveling, supported by pitiful remittances from former friends in England and Spain — doles which often failed to arrive, so that he was reduced to the few and paltry gold pieces which he could win from Baron Perotti or from the Baron's guests. He could even forget

that his highest aim now was to return to his natal city where he had been cast into prison and from which, since his escape, he had been banned; to return as one of the meanest of its citizens, as writer, as beggar, as nonentity; to accept so inglorious a close to a once brilliant career.

Marcolina listened attentively like the others, but with the same expression as if she had been listening to someone reading aloud from an amusing narrative. Her face did not betray the remotest realization of the fact that the speaker was Casanova; that she was listening to the man who had had all these experiences and many more; that she was sitting beside the lover of a thousand women. Very different was the fire in Amalia's eyes. To her, Casanova was the same as ever. To her, his voice was no less seductive than it had been sixteen years earlier. He could not but be aware that at a word or a sign, and as soon as he pleased, he could revive this old adventure. But what to him was Amalia at this hour, when he longed for Marcolina as he had never longed for woman before. Beneath the shimmering folds of her dress he seemed to see her naked body; her firm young breasts allured him; once when she stooped to pick up her handkerchief, Casanova's inflamed fancy made him attach so ardent a significance to her movement that he felt near to swooning. Marcolina did not fail to notice the involuntary pause in the flow of his conversation; she perceived that his gaze had begun to flicker strangely. In her countenance he could read a sudden hostility, a protest, a trace of disgust.

Casanova speedily recovered his self-command, and was about to continue his reminiscences with renewed vigor, when a portly priest entered. Olivo introduced him as Abbate Rossi, and Casanova at once recognized him as the man he had met twenty-seven years earlier upon a market boat plying between Venice and Chioggia.

"You had one eye bandaged," said Casanova, who rarely missed a chance of showing off his excellent memory. "A young peasant-woman wearing a yellow kerchief round her head advised you to use a healing unguent which an apothecary with an exceedingly hoarse voice happened to have with him."

The Abbate nodded, and smiled, well-pleased. Then, with a sly expression, he came quite close to Casanova, as if about to tell him a secret. But he spoke out loud.

"As for you, Signor Casanova, you were with a wedding party. I don't know whether you were one of the ordinary guests or whether you were best man, but I remember that the bride looked at you far more languishingly than at the bridegroom. The wind rose; there was half a gale; you began to read a risky poem."

"No doubt the Chevalier only did so in order to lay the storm," said Marcolina.

"I never claim the powers of a wizard," rejoined Casanova. "But I will not deny that after I had begun to read, no one bothered about the storm." The three girls had encircled the Abbate. For an excellent reason. From his capacious pockets he produced quantities of luscious sweets, and popped them into the children's mouths with his stumpy fingers. Meanwhile Olivo gave the newcomer a circumstantial account of the rediscovery of Casanova. Dreamily Amalia continued to gaze at the beloved guest's masterful brown forehead.

The children ran out into the garden; Marcolina had risen from the table and was watching them through the open window. The Abbate had brought a message from the Marchese Celsi, who proposed to call that evening, with his wife, upon his dear friend Olivo.

"Excellent," said Olivo. "We shall have a pleasant game of cards in honor of the Chevalier. I am expecting the two Ricardis; and Lorenzi is also coming — the girls met him out riding this morning."

"Is he still here?" asked the Abbate. "A week ago I was told he had to rejoin his regiment."

"I expect the Marchesa got him an extension of leave from the Colonel."

"I am surprised," interjected Casanova, "that any Mantuese officers can get leave at present." He went on: "Two friends of mine, one from Mantua and the other from Cremona, left last night with their regiments,

marching towards Milan."

"Has war broken out?" inquired Marcolina from the window. She had turned round; her face betrayed nothing, but there was a slight quaver in her voice which no one but Casanova noticed.

"It may come to nothing," he said lightly. "But the Spaniards seem rather bellicose, and it is necessary to be on the alert."

Olivo looked important and wrinkled his brow. "Does anyone know," he asked, "whether we shall side with Spain or with France?"

"I don't think Lieutenant Lorenzi will care a straw about that," suggested the Abbate. "All he wants is a chance to prove his military prowess."

"He has done so already," said Amalia. "He was in the battle at Pavia three years ago."

Marcolina said not a word.

Casanova knew enough. He went to the window beside Marcolina and looked out into the garden. He saw nothing but the wide greensward where the children were playing. It was surrounded by a close-set row of stately trees within the encompassing wall.

"What lovely grounds," he said, turning to Olivo. "I should so like to have a look at them."

"Nothing would please me better, Chevalier," answered Olivo, "than to show you my vineyards and the rest of my estate. You need only ask Amalia, and she will tell you that during the years since I bought this little place I have had no keener desire than to welcome you as guest upon my own land and under my own roof. Ten times at least I was on the point of writing you an invitation, but was always withheld by the doubt whether my letter would reach you. If I did happen to hear from some one that he had recently seen you in Lisbon, I could be quite sure that in the interval you would have left for Warsaw or Vienna. Now, when as if by miracle I have caught you on the point of quitting Mantua, and when — I can assure you, Amalia, it was no easy matter — I have succeeded in enticing you here, you are so niggard with your time that — would you believe it, Signor Abbate, he refuses to spare us more than a couple of days!"

"Perhaps the Chevalier will allow himself to be persuaded to prolong his visit," said the Abbate, who was contentedly munching a huge mouthful of peach. As he spoke, he glanced at Amalia in a way that led Casanova to infer that his hostess had told the Abbate more than she had told her husband.

"I fear that will be quite impossible," said Casanova with decision. "I need not conceal from friends who are so keenly interested in my fortunes, that my Venetian fellow-citizens are on the point of atoning for the injustice of earlier years. The atonement comes rather late, but is all the more honorable. I should seem ungrateful, or even rancorous, were I to resist their importunities any longer." With a wave of his hand he warded off an eager but respectful enquiry which he saw taking shape upon his host's lips, and hastened to remark: "Well, Olivo, I am ready. Show me your little kingdom."

"Would it not be wiser," interposed Amalia, "to wait until it is cooler? I am sure the Chevalier would prefer to rest for a while, or to stroll in the shade." Her eyes sought Casanova's with shy entreaty, as if she thought her fate would be decided once again during such a walk in the garden.

No one had anything to say against Amalia's suggestion, and they all went out of doors. Marcolina, who led the way, ran across the sunlit greensward to join the children in their game of battledore and shuttlecock. She was hardly taller than the eldest of the three girls; and when her hair came loose in the exercise and floated over her shoulders she too looked like a child. Olivo and the Abbate seated themselves on a stone bench beneath the trees, not far from the house. Amalia sauntered on with Casanova. As soon as the two were out of hearing, she began to converse with Casanova in a tone which seemed to ignore the lapse of years.

"So we meet again, Casanova! How I have longed for this day. I never doubted its coming."

“A mere chance has brought me,” said Casanova coldly.

Amalia smiled. “Have it your own way,” she said. “Anyhow, you are here! All these sixteen years I have done nothing but dream of this day!”

“I can’t help thinking,” countered Casanova, “that throughout the long interval you must have dreamed of many other things — and must have done more than dream.”

Amalia shook her head. “You know better, Casanova. Nor had you forgotten me, for were it otherwise, in your eagerness to get to Venice, you would never have accepted Olivo’s invitation.”

“What do you mean, Amalia? Can you imagine I have come here to betray your husband?”

“How can you use such a phrase, Casanova? Were I to be yours once again, there would be neither betrayal nor sin.”

Casanova laughed. “No sin? Wherefore not? Because I’m an old man?”

“You are not old. For me you can never be an old man. In your arms I had my first taste of bliss, and I doubt not it is my destiny that my last bliss shall be shared with you!”

“Your last?” rejoined Casanova cynically, though he was not altogether unmoved. “I think my friend Olivo would have a word to say about that.”

“What you speak of,” said Amalia reddening, “is duty, and even pleasure; but it is not and never has been bliss.”

They did not walk to the end of the grass alley. Both seemed to shun the neighborhood of the greensward, where Marcolina and the children were playing. As if by common consent they retraced their steps, and, silent now, approached the house again. One of the ground-floor windows at the gable end of the house was open. Through this Casanova glimpsed in the dark interior a half-drawn curtain, from behind which the foot of a bed projected. Over an adjoining chair was hanging a light, gauzy dress.

“Is that Marcolina’s room?” enquired Casanova.

Amalia nodded. “Do you like her?” she said — nonchalantly, as it seemed to Casanova.

“Of course, since she is good looking.”

“She’s a good girl as well.”

Casanova shrugged, as if the goodness were no concern of his. Then: “Tell me, Amalia, did you think me still handsome when you first saw me to-day?”

“I do not know if your looks have changed. To me you seem just the same as of old. You are as I have always seen you, as I have seen you in my dreams.”

“Look well, Amalia. See the wrinkles on my forehead; the loose folds of my neck; the crow’s-feet round my eyes. And look,” he grinned, “I have lost one of my eye teeth. Look at these hands, too, Amalia. My fingers are like claws; there are yellow spots on the finger-nails; the blue veins stand out. They are the hands of an old man.”

She clasped both his hands as he held them out for her to see, and affectionately kissed them one after the other in the shaded walk. “To-night, I will kiss you on the lips,” she said, with a mingling of humility and tenderness, which roused his gall.

Close by, where the alley opened on to the greensward, Marcolina was stretched on the grass, her hands clasped beneath her head, looking skyward while the shuttlecocks flew to and fro. Suddenly reaching upwards, she seized one of them in mid air, and laughed triumphantly. The girls flung themselves upon her as she lay defenceless.

Casanova thrilled. “Neither my lips nor my hands are yours to kiss. Your waiting for me and your dreams of me will prove to have been vain — unless I should first make Marcolina mine.”

“Are you mad, Casanova?” exclaimed Amalia, with distress in her voice.

“If I am, we are both on the same footing,” replied Casanova. “You are mad because in me, an old man, you think that you can rediscover the beloved of your youth; I am mad because I have taken it into my head that I wish to possess Marcolina. But perhaps we shall both be restored to reason. Marcolina shall restore me to youth — for you. So help me to my wishes, Amalia!”

“You are really beside yourself, Casanova. What you ask is impossible. She will have nothing to do with any man.”

Casanova laughed. “What about Lieutenant Lorenzi?”

“Lorenzi? What do you mean?”

“He is her lover. I am sure of it.”

“You are utterly mistaken. He asked for her hand, and she rejected his proposal. Yet he is young and handsome. I almost think him handsomer than you ever were, Casanova!”

“He was a suitor for her hand?”

“Ask Olivo if you don’t believe me.”

“Well, what do I care about that? What care I whether she be virgin or strumpet, wife or widow — I want to make her mine!”

“I can’t give her to you, my friend!” Amalia’s voice expressed genuine concern.

“You see for yourself,” he said, “what a pitiful creature I have become. Ten years ago, five years ago, I should have needed neither helper nor advocate, even though Marcolina had been the very goddess of virtue. And now I am trying to make you play the procuress. If I were only a rich man. Had I but ten thousand ducats. But I have not even ten. I am a beggar, Amalia.”

“Had you a hundred thousand, you could not buy Marcolina. What does she care about money? She loves books, the sky, the meadows, butterflies, playing with children. She has inherited a small competence which more than suffices for her needs.”

“Were I but a sovereign prince,” cried Casanova, somewhat theatrically, as was his wont when strongly moved. “Had I but the power to commit men to prison, to send them to the scaffold. But I am nothing. A beggar, and a liar into the bargain. I importune the Supreme Council for a post, a crust of bread, a home! What a poor thing have I become! Are you not sickened by me, Amalia?”

“I love you, Casanova!”

“Then give her to me, Amalia. It rests with you, I am confident. Tell her what you please. Say I have threatened you. Say you think I am capable of setting fire to the house. Say I am a fool, a dangerous lunatic escaped from an asylum, but that the embraces of a virgin will restore me to sanity. Yes, tell her that.”

“She does not believe in miracles.”

“Does not believe in miracles? Then she does not believe in God either. So much the better! I have influence with the Archbishop of Milan. Tell her so. I can ruin her. I can destroy you all. It is true, Amalia. What books does she read? Doubtless some of them are on the Index. Let me see them. I will compile a list. A hint from me....”

“Not a word more, Casanova! Here she comes. Keep yourself well in hand; do not let your eyes betray you. Listen, Casanova; I have never known a purer-minded girl. Did she suspect what I have heard from you, she would feel herself soiled, and for the rest of your stay she would not so much as look at you. Talk to her; talk to her. You will soon ask her pardon and mine.”

Marcolina came up with the girls, who ran on into the house. She paused, as if out of courtesy to the guest, standing before him, while Amalia deliberately withdrew. Indeed, it actually seemed to Casanova that from

those pale, half-parted lips, from the smooth brow crowned with light-brown hair now restored to order, there emanated an aroma of aloofness and purity. Rarely had he had this feeling with regard to any woman; nor had he had it in the case of Marcolina when they were within four walls. A devotional mood, a spirit of self-sacrifice knowing nothing of desire, seemed to take possession of his soul. Discreetly, in a respectful tone such as at that day was customary towards persons of rank, in a manner which she could not but regard as flattering, he enquired whether it was her purpose to resume her studies that evening. She answered that in the country her work was somewhat irregular. Nevertheless, even during free hours, mathematical problems upon which she had recently been pondering, would at times invade her mind unawares. This had just happened while she was lying on the greensward gazing up into the sky.

Casanova, emboldened by the friendliness of her demeanor, asked jestingly what was the nature of this lofty, urgent problem. She replied, in much the same tone, that it had nothing whatever to do with the Cabala, with which, so rumor ran, the Chevalier de Seingalt worked wonders. He would therefore not know what to make of her problem.

Casanova was piqued that she should speak of the Cabala with such unconcealed contempt. In his rare hours of heart-searching he was well aware that the mystical system of numbers which passed by that name had neither sense nor purpose. He knew it had no correspondence with any natural reality; that it was no more than an instrument whereby cheats and jesters — Casanova assumed these roles by turn, and was a master player in both capacities — could lead credulous fools by the nose. Nevertheless, in defiance of his own better judgment, he now undertook to defend the Cabala as a serious and perfectly valid science. He spoke of the divine nature of the number seven, to which there are so many references in Holy Writ; of the deep prophetic significance of pyramids of figures, for the construction of which he had himself invented a new system; and of the frequent fulfilment of the forecasts he had based upon this system. In Amsterdam, a few years ago, through the use of arithmancy, he had induced Hope the banker to take over the insurance of a ship which was already reported lost, whereby the banker had made two hundred thousand gold guilders. He held forth so eloquently in defence of his preposterous theories that, as often happened, he began to believe all the nonsense he was talking. At length he went so far as to maintain that the Cabala was not so much a branch of mathematics as the metaphysical perfectionment of mathematics.

At this point, Marcolina, who had been listening attentively and with apparent seriousness, suddenly assumed a half-commiserating, half-mischievous expression, and said:

“You are trying, Signor Casanova” — she seemed deliberately to avoid addressing him as Chevalier— “to give me an elaborate proof of your renowned talent as entertainer, and I am extremely grateful to you. But of course you know as well as I do that the Cabala has not merely nothing to do with mathematics, but is in conflict with the very essence of mathematics. The Cabala bears to mathematics the same sort of relationship that the confused or fallacious chatter of the Sophists bore to the serene, lofty doctrines of Plato and of Aristotle.”

“Nevertheless, beautiful and learned Marcolina, you will admit,” answered Casanova promptly, “that even the Sophists were far from being such contemptible, foolish apprentices as your harsh criticism would imply. Let me give you a contemporary example. M. Voltaire’s whole technique of thought and writing entitles us to describe him as an Arch-Sophist. Yet no one will refuse the due meed of honor to his extraordinary talent. I would not myself refuse it, though I am at this moment engaged in composing a polemic against him. Let me add that I am not allowing myself to be influenced in his favor by recollection of the extreme civility he was good enough to show me when I visited him at Ferney ten years ago.”

“It is really most considerate of you to be so lenient in your criticism of the greatest mind of the century!”

Marcolina smilingly retorted.

"A great mind — the greatest of the century!" exclaimed Casanova. "To give him such a designation seems to me inadmissible, were it only because, for all his genius, he is an ungodly man — nay positively an atheist. No atheist can be a man of great mind."

"As I see the matter, there is no such incompatibility. But the first thing you have to prove is your title to describe Voltaire as an atheist."

Casanova was now in his element. In the opening chapter of his polemic he had cited from Voltaire's works, especially from the famous *Pucelle*, a number of passages that seemed peculiarly well-fitted to justify the charge of atheism. Thanks to his unfailing memory, he was able to repeat these citations verbatim, and to marshal his own counter-arguments. But in Marcolina he had to cope with an opponent who was little inferior to himself in extent of knowledge and mental acumen; and who, moreover, excelled him, not perhaps in fluency of speech, but at any rate in artistry of presentation and clarity of expression. The passages Casanova had selected as demonstrating Voltaire's spirit of mockery, his scepticism, and his atheism, were adroitly interpreted by Marcolina as testifying to the Frenchman's scientific genius, to his skill as an author, and to his indefatigable ardor in the search for truth. She boldly contended that doubt, mockery, nay unbelief itself, if associated with such a wealth of knowledge, such absolute honesty, and such high courage, must be more pleasing to God than the humility of the pious, which was apt to be a mask for lack of capacity to think logically, and often enough — there were plenty of examples — a mask for cowardice and hypocrisy.

Casanova listened with growing astonishment. He felt quite incompetent to convert Marcolina to his own way of thinking; all the more as he increasingly realized that her counterstrokes were threatening to demolish the tottering intellectual edifice which, of late years, he had been accustomed to mistake for faith. He took refuge in the trite assertion that such views as Marcolina's were a menace, not only to the ecclesiastical ordering of society, but to the very foundations of social life. This enabled him to make a clever change of front, to pass into the field of politics, where he hoped that his wide experience and his knowledge of the world would render it possible for him to get the better of his adversary. But although she lacked acquaintance with the notable personalities of the age; although she was without inside knowledge of courtly and diplomatic intrigues; although, therefore, she had to renounce any attempt to answer Casanova in detail, even when she felt there was good reason to distrust the accuracy of his assertions — nevertheless, it was clear to him from the tenor of her remarks, that she had little respect for the princes of the earth or for the institutions of state; and she made no secret of her conviction that, alike in small things and in great, the world was not so much a world ruled by selfishness and lust for power, as a world in a condition of hopeless confusion. Rarely had Casanova encountered such freedom of thought in women; never had he met with anything of the kind in a girl who was certainly not yet twenty years old. It was painful to him to remember that in earlier and better days his own mind had with deliberate, self-complacent boldness moved along the paths whereon Marcolina was now advancing — although in her case there did not seem to exist any consciousness of exceptional courage. Fascinated by the uniqueness of her methods of thought and expression, he almost forgot that he was walking beside a young, beautiful, desirable woman, a forgetfulness all the more remarkable as the two were alone in the leafy alley, and at a considerable distance from the house.

Suddenly, breaking off in the middle of a sentence, Marcolina joyfully exclaimed, "Here comes my uncle!"

Casanova, as if he had to rectify an omission, whispered in her ear: "What a nuisance. I should have liked to go on talking to you for hours, Marcolina." He was aware that his eyes were again lighting up with desire.

At this Marcolina, who in the spirited exchange of their recent conversation had almost abandoned her

defensive attitude, displayed a renewed reserve. Her expression manifested the same protest, the same repulsion, which had wounded Casanova earlier in the day.

"Am I really so repulsive?" he anxiously asked himself. Then, replying in thought to his own question: "No, that is not the reason. Marcolina is not really a woman. She is a she-professor, a she-philosopher, one of the wonders of the world perhaps — but not a woman."

Yet even as he mused, he knew he was merely attempting to deceive himself, console himself, save himself; and all his endeavors were vain.

Olivo, who had now come up, addressed Marcolina. "Have I not done well to invite some one here with whom you can converse as learnedly as with your professors at Bologna?"

"Indeed, Uncle," answered Marcolina, "there was not one of them who would have ventured to challenge Voltaire to a duel!"

"What, Voltaire? The Chevalier has called him out?" cried Olivo, misunderstanding the jest.

"Your witty niece, Olivo, refers to the polemic on which I have been at work for the last few days, the pastime of leisure hours. I used to have weightier occupations."

Marcolina, ignoring this remark, said: "You will find it pleasantly cool now for your walk. Goodbye for the present." She nodded a farewell, and moved briskly across the greensward to the house.

Casanova, repressing an impulse to follow her with his eyes, enquired: "Is Signora Amalia coming with us?"

"No, Chevalier," answered Olivo. "She has a number of things to attend to in the house; and besides, this is the girls' lesson time."

"What an excellent housewife and mother! You're a lucky fellow, Olivo!"

"I tell myself the same thing every day," responded Olivo, with tears in his eyes.

They passed by the gable end of the house. Marcolina's window was still open; the pale, diaphanous gown showed up against the dark background of the room. Along the wide chestnut avenue they made their way on to the road, now completely in the shade. Leisurely, they walked up the slope skirting the garden wall. Where it ended, the vineyard began. Between tall poles, from which purple clusters hung, Olivo led his guest to the summit. With a complacent air of ownership, he waved towards the house, lying at the foot of the hill. Casanova fancied he could detect a female figure flitting to and fro in the turret chamber.

The sun was near to setting, but the heat was still considerable. Beads of perspiration coursed down Olivo's cheeks, but Casanova's brow showed no trace of moisture. Strolling down the farther slope, they reached an olive grove. From tree to tree vines were trained trellis-wise, while between the rows of olive trees golden ears of corn swayed in the breeze.

"In a thousand ways," said Casanova appreciatively, "the sun brings increase."

With even greater wealth of detail than before, Olivo recounted how he had acquired this fine estate, and how two great vintage years and two good harvests had made him a well-to-do, in fact a wealthy, man.

Casanova pursued the train of his own thoughts, attending to Olivo's narrative only in so far as was requisite to enable him from time to time to interpose a polite question or to make an appropriate comment. Nothing claimed his interest until Olivo, after talking of all and sundry, came back to the topic of his family, and at length to Marcolina. But Casanova learned little that was new. She had lost her mother early. Her father, Olivo's half-brother, had been a physician in Bologna. Marcolina, while still a child, had astonished everyone by her precocious intelligence; but the marvel was soon staled by custom. A few years later, her father died. Since then she had been an inmate in the household of a distinguished professor at the university of Bologna, Morgagni to wit, who hoped that his pupil would become a woman of great learning. She always

spent the summer with her uncle. There had been several proposals for her hand; one from a Bolognese merchant; one from a neighboring landowner; and lastly the proposal of Lieutenant Lorenzi. She had refused them all, and it seemed to be her design to devote her whole life to the service of knowledge. As Olivo rambled on with his story, Casanova's desires grew beyond measure, while the recognition that these desires were utterly foolish and futile reduced him almost to despair.

CHAPTER THREE.



CASANOVA AND OLIVO regained the highroad. In a cloud of dust, a carriage drove up, and as they drew near the occupants shouted greetings. The newcomers were an elderly gentleman in elegant attire and a lady who was somewhat younger, of generous proportions, and conspicuously rouged.

"The Marchese," whispered Olivo to his companion.

The carriage halted.

"Good evening, my dear Olivo," said the Marchese. "Will you be so good as to introduce me to the Chevalier de Seingalt? I have no doubt that it is the Chevalier whom I have the pleasure of seeing."

Casanova bowed, saying: "Yes, I am he."

"I am the Marchese Celsi. Let me present the Marchesa, my spouse." The lady offered her finger tips. Casanova touched them with his lips.

The Marchese was two or three inches taller than Casanova, and unnaturally lean. He had a narrow face, of a yellow, waxy tint; his greenish eyes were piercing; his thick eyebrows were of reddish color, and met across the root of the nose. These characteristics gave him a somewhat formidable aspect. "My good Olivo," he said, "we are all going to the same destination. Since it is little more than half a mile to your house, I shall get out and walk with you. You won't mind driving the rest of the way alone," he added, turning to the Marchesa, who had meanwhile been gazing at Casanova with searching, passionate eyes. Without awaiting his wife's answer, the Marchese nodded to the coachman, who promptly lashed the horses furiously, as if he had some reason for driving his mistress away at top speed. In an instant the carriage vanished in a whirl of dust.

"The whole neighborhood," said the Marchese, "is already aware that the Chevalier de Seingalt has come to spend a few days with his friend Olivo. It must be glorious to bear so renowned a name."

"You flatter me, Signor Marchese," replied Casanova. "I have not yet abandoned the hope of winning such a name, but I am still far from having done so. It may be that a work on which I am now engaged will bring me nearer to the goal."

"We can take a short cut here," said Olivo, turning into a path which led straight to the wall of his garden.

"Work?" echoed the Marchese with a doubtful air. "May I enquire to what work you refer, Chevalier?"

"If you ask me that question, Signor Marchese, I shall in my turn feel impelled to enquire what you meant just now when you referred to my renown."

Arrogantly he faced the Marchese's piercing eyes. He knew perfectly well that neither his romance *Icosameron* nor yet his *Confutazione della storia del governo veneto d'Amelot de la Houssaie* had brought him any notable reputation as an author. Nevertheless it was his pose to imply that for him no other sort of reputation was desirable. He therefore deliberately misunderstood the Marchese's tentative observations and cautious allusions, which implied that Casanova was a celebrated seducer, gamester, man of affairs, political emissary, or what not. Celsi made no reference to authorship, for he had never heard of either the *Refutation of Amelot* or the *Icosameron*. At length, therefore, in polite embarrassment, he said: "After all, there is only one Casanova."

"There, likewise, you are mistaken, Signor Marchese," said Casanova coldly. "I have relatives, and a connoisseur like yourself must surely be acquainted with the name of one of my brothers, Francesco Casanova, the painter."

It seemed that the Marchese had no claim to connoisseurship in this field either, and he turned the

conversation to acquaintances living in Naples, Rome, Milan, or Mantua, persons whom Casanova was not unlikely to have met. In this connection he also mentioned the name of Baron Perotti, but somewhat contemptuously.

Casanova was constrained to admit that he often played cards at the Baron's house. "For distraction," he explained; "for half an hour's relaxation before bedtime. In general, I have given up this way of wasting my time."

"I am sorry," said the Marchese, "for I must own it has been one of the dreams of my life to cross swords with you. Not only, indeed, at the card table; for when I was younger I would gladly have been your rival in other fields. Would you believe it — I forget how long ago it was — I once entered Spa on the very day, at the very hour, when you left the place. Our carriages must have passed one another on the road. In Ratisbon, too, I had the same piece of ill luck. There I actually occupied the room of which your tenancy had just expired."

"It is indeed unfortunate," said Casanova, flattered in spite of himself, "that people's paths so often cross too late in life."

"Not yet too late!" exclaimed the Marchese. "There are certain respects in which I shall not be loath to avow myself vanquished before the fight begins. But as regards games of chance, my dear Chevalier, we are perhaps both of us precisely at the age...."

Casanova cut him short. "At the age — very likely. Unfortunately, however, I can no longer look forward to the pleasure of measuring myself at the card table with a partner of your rank. The reason is simple." He spoke in the tone of a dethroned sovereign. "Despite my renown, my dear Marchese, I am now practically reduced to the condition of a beggar."

The Marchese involuntarily lowered his eyes before Casanova's haughty gaze. He shook his head incredulously, as if he had been listening to a strange jest. Olivo, who had followed the conversation with the keenest attention, and had accompanied the skilful parries of his marvellous friend with approving nods, could hardly repress a gesture of alarm. They had just reached a narrow wooden door in the garden wall. Olivo produced a key, and turned the creaking lock. Giving the Marchese precedence into the garden, he arrested Casanova by the arm, whispering:

"You must take back those last words, Chevalier, before you set foot in my house again. The money I have been owing you these sixteen years awaits you. I was only afraid to speak of it. Amalia will tell you. It is counted out and ready. I had proposed to hand it over to you on your departure...."

Casanova gently interrupted him. "You owe me nothing, Olivo. You know perfectly well that those paltry gold pieces were a wedding present from the friend of Amalia's mother. Please drop the subject. What are a few ducats to me?" He raised his voice as he spoke, so that the Marchese, who had paused at a few paces' distance could hear the concluding words. "I stand at a turning-point in my fortunes."

Olivo exchanged glances with Casanova, as if asking permission, and then explained to the Marchese: "You must know that the Chevalier has been summoned to Venice, and will set out for home in a few days."

"I would rather put it," remarked Casanova as they approached the house, "that summonses, growing ever more urgent, have been reaching me for a considerable while. But it seems to me that the senators took long enough to make up their minds, and may in their turn practise the virtue of patience."

"Unquestionably," said the Marchese, "you are entitled to stand upon your dignity, Chevalier."

They emerged from the avenue on to the greensward, across which the shadow of the house had now lengthened. Close to the dwelling, the rest of the little company was awaiting them. All rose and came to meet them. The Abbate led the way, with Marcolina and Amalia on either side. They were followed by the

Marchesa, with whom came a tall, young officer, clad in a red uniform trimmed with silver lace, and wearing jack-boots — evidently Lorenzi. As he spoke to the Marchesa, he scanned her powdered shoulders as if they were well-known samples of other beauties with which he was equally familiar. The Marchesa smiled up at him beneath half-closed lids. Even a tyro in such matters could hardly fail to realize the nature of their relationship, or to perceive that they were quite unconcerned at its disclosure. They were conversing in animated fashion, but in low tones; and they ceased talking only when they caught up with the others.

Olivo introduced Casanova and Lorenzi to one another. They exchanged glances with a cold aloofness that seemed to offer mutual assurances of dislike; then, with a forced smile, both bowed stiffly without offering to shake hands. Lorenzi was handsome, with a narrow visage and features sharply cut for his age. At the back of his eyes something difficult to grasp seemed to lurk, something likely to suggest caution to one of experience. For a moment, Casanova was in doubt as to who it was that Lorenzi reminded him of. Then he realized that his own image stood before him, the image of himself as he had been thirty years before. “Have I been reincarnated in his form?” Casanova asked himself. “But I must have died before that could happen.” It flashed through his mind: “Have I not been dead for a long time? What is there left of the Casanova who was young, handsome, and happy?” Amalia broke in upon his musings. As if from a distance, though she stood close at hand, she asked him how he had enjoyed his walk. Raising his voice so that all could hear, he expressed his admiration for the fertile, well-managed estate.

Meanwhile upon the greensward the maidservant was laying the table for supper. The two elder girls were “helping.” With much fuss and giggling, they brought out of the house the silver, the wine glasses, and other requisites.

Gradually the dusk fell; a cool breeze stirred through the garden. Marcolina went to the table, to put the finishing touches to the work of the maidservant and the girls. The others wandered about the greensward and along the alleys. The Marchesa was extremely polite to Casanova. She said that the story of his remarkable escape from The Leads in Venice was not unknown to her, but it would be a pleasure to hear it from his own lips. With a meaning smile she added that she understood him to have had far more dangerous adventures, which he might perhaps be less inclined to recount. Casanova rejoined that he had indeed had a number of lively experiences, but had never made serious acquaintance with that mode of existence whose meaning and very essence were danger. Although, many years before, during troublous times, he had for a few months been a soldier upon the island of Corfu (was there any profession on earth into which the current of fate had not drifted him?), he had never had the good fortune to go through a real campaign, such as that which, he understood, Lieutenant Lorenzi was about to experience — a piece of luck for which he was inclined to envy the Lieutenant.

“Then you know more than I do, Signor Casanova,” said Lorenzi in a challenging tone. “Indeed, you are better informed than the Colonel himself, for he has just given me an indefinite extension of leave.”

“Is that so?” exclaimed the Marchese, unable to master his rage. He added spitefully: “Do you know, Lorenzi, we, or rather my wife, had counted so definitely on your leaving, that we had invited one of our friends, Baldi the singer, to stay with us next week.”

“No matter,” rejoined Lorenzi, unperturbed. “Baldi and I are the best of friends. We shall get on famously together. You think so, don’t you?” he said, turning to the Marchesa with a smile. “You’d better!” said the Marchesa, laughing gaily.

As she spoke she seated herself at the table, beside Olivo, with Lorenzi on the other hand. Opposite sat Amalia, between the Marchese and Casanova. Next to Casanova, at one end of the long, narrow table, was Marcolina; next to Olivo, at the other end, sat the Abbate. Supper, like dinner, was a simple but tasteful meal.

The two elder girls, Teresina and Nanetta, waited on the guests, and served the excellent wine grown on Olivo's hillsides. Both the Marchese and the Abbate paid their thanks to the young waitresses with playful and somewhat equivocal caresses which a stricter parent than Olivo would probably have discountenanced. Amalia seemed to be unaware of all this. She was pale, dejected, and looked like a woman determined to be old, since her own youth had ceased to interest her.

"Is this all that remains of my empire?" thought Casanova bitterly, contemplating her in profile. Yet perhaps it was the illumination which gave so gloomy a cast to Amalia's features. From the interior of the house a broad beam of light fell upon the guests. Otherwise the glimmer in the sky sufficed them. The dark crests of the trees limited the outlook; Casanova was reminded of the eerie garden in which, late one evening many years before, he had awaited the coming of his mistress.

"Murano!" he whispered to himself, and trembled. Then he spoke aloud: "On an island near Venice there is a convent garden where I last set foot several decades ago. At night, there, the scent is just like this."

"Were you ever a monk?" asked the Marchesa, sportively.

"All but," replied Casanova with a smile, explaining, truthfully enough, that when he was a lad of fifteen he had been given minor orders by the archbishop of Venice, but that before attaining full manhood he had decided to lay aside the cassock.

The Abbate mentioned that there was a nunnery close at hand, and strongly recommended Casanova to visit the place if he had never seen it. Olivo heartily endorsed the recommendation, singing the praises of the picturesque old building, the situation, and the diversified beauties of the approach.

"The Lady Abbess, Sister Serafina," continued the Abbate, "is an extremely learned woman, a duchess by birth. She has told me — by letter, of course, for the inmates are under a vow of perpetual silence — that she has heard of Marcolina's erudition, and would like to meet her face to face."

"I hope, Marcolina," said Lorenzi, speaking to her for the first time, "that you will not attempt to imitate the noble abbess in other respects as well as learning."

"Why should I?" rejoined Marcolina serenely. "We can maintain our freedom without vows. Better without than with, for a vow is a form of coercion."

Casanova was sitting next to her. He did not dare to let his foot touch hers lightly, or to press his knee against hers. He was certain that should she for the third time look at him with that expression of horror and loathing, he would be driven to some act of folly. As the meal progressed, as the number of emptied glasses grew and the conversation waxed livelier and more general, Casanova heard, once more as from afar, Amalia's voice.

"I have spoken to Marcolina."

"You have spoken to her?" A mad hope flamed up in him. "Calm yourself, Casanova. We did not speak of you, but only of her and her plans for the future. I say to you again, she will never give herself to any man."

Olivo, who had been drinking freely, suddenly rose, glass in hand, and delivered himself of a few stumbling phrases concerning the great honor conferred upon his humble home by the visit of his dear friend, the Chevalier de Seingalt.

"But where, my dear Olivo, is the Chevalier de Seingalt of whom you speak?" enquired Lorenzi in his clear, insolent voice.

Casanova's first impulse was to throw the contents of his glass in Lorenzi's face.

Amalia touched his arm lightly, to restrain him, and said: "Many people to-day, Chevalier, still know you best by the old and more widely renowned name of Casanova."

"I was not aware," said Lorenzi, with offensive gravity, "that the King of France had ennobled Signor

Casanova."

"I was able to save the King that trouble," answered Casanova quietly. "I trust, Lieutenant Lorenzi, that you will be satisfied with an explanation to which the Burgomaster of Nuremberg offered no objection when I gave it to him in circumstances with which I need not weary the company." There was a moment of silent expectation. Casanova continued: "The alphabet is our common heritage. I chose a collocation of letters which pleased my taste, and ennobled myself without being indebted to any prince, who might perhaps have been disinclined to allow my claim. I style myself Casanova, Chevalier de Seingalt. I am indeed sorry, Lieutenant Lorenzi, if this name fails to meet with your approval."

"Seingalt! It is a splendid name," said the Abbate, repeating it several times, as if he were tasting it.

"There is not a man in the world," exclaimed Olivo, "who has a better right to name himself Chevalier than my distinguished friend Casanova!"

"As for you, Lorenzi," added the Marchese, "when your reputation has reached as far as that of Signor Casanova, Chevalier de Seingalt, we shall be willing enough, should you so desire, to give you also the title of Chevalier."

Casanova, somewhat nettled at not being allowed to fight his own battle, was about to resume the defence in person, when out of the dusk of the garden two elderly gentlemen, soberly habited, put in an appearance beside the table. Olivo greeted them with effusive cordiality, being delighted to turn the conversation and to put an end to a dispute that threatened to destroy the harmony of the evening. The newcomers were the brothers Ricardi. As Casanova had learned from Olivo, they were old bachelors. At one time members of the great world, they had been unfortunate in various undertakings. At length they had returned to their birthplace, the neighboring village, to lead a retired life in a tiny house they had rented. They were eccentric fellows, but quite harmless.

The Ricardis expressed their delight at renewing their acquaintance with the Chevalier, whom, they said, they had met in Paris a good many years ago.

Casanova could not recall the meeting.

"Perhaps it was in Madrid?" said the Ricardis.

"Maybe," replied Casanova, though he was absolutely certain that he had never seen either of them before.

The younger of the two was spokesman. The elder, who looked as if he might be ninety at least, accompanied his brother's words with incessant nods and grimaces. By now every one had left the table, and before this the children had disappeared. Lorenzi and the Marchesa were strolling in the dusk across the greensward. Marcolina and Amalia were in the hall, setting out the table for cards.

"What is the aim of all this?" said Casanova to himself, as he stood alone in the garden. "Do they imagine me to be rich? Are they on the lookout for plunder?"

These preparations, the ingratiating manners of the Marchese, the sedulous attentions of the Abbate, the appearance of the brothers Ricardi on the scene, were arousing his suspicions. Was it not possible that Lorenzi might be a party to the intrigue? Or Marcolina? Or even Amalia? For a moment it flashed through his mind that his enemies might be at work upon some scheme of the eleventh hour to make his return to Venice difficult or impossible. But a moment's reflection convinced him the notion was absurd — were it only because he no longer had any enemies. He was merely an old fellow in reduced circumstances. Who was likely to take any trouble to hinder his return to Venice? Glancing through the open window, he saw the company assembling round the table, where the cards lay ready, and the filled wine-glasses were standing. It seemed to him clear beyond all possibility of doubt that there was nothing afoot except an ordinary, innocent game of cards, in which the coming of a new player is always an agreeable change.

Marcolina passed him, and wished him good luck.

"Aren't you going to take a hand?" he said. "At least you will look on?"

"I have something else to do. Good night, Chevalier."

From the interior, voices called out into the night: "Lorenzi."— "Chevalier."— "We are waiting for you."

Casanova, standing in the darkness, could see that the Marchesa was leading Lorenzi away from the open greensward into the greater darkness under the trees. There she would fain have drawn him into her arms, but Lorenzi roughly tore himself away and strode towards the house. Meeting Casanova in the entry, he gave him precedence with mock politeness. Casanova accepted the precedence without a word of thanks.

The Marchese was the first banker. Olivo, the brothers Ricardi, and the Abbate staked such trifling amounts that to Casanova — even to-day when his whole worldly wealth consisted of no more than a few ducats — the game seemed ludicrous. All the more was this the case since the Marchese raked in his winnings and paid out his losses with a ceremonious air, as if he were handling enormous sums. Suddenly Lorenzi, who had hitherto taken no part in the game, staked a ducat, won, let the doubled stake stand; won again and again, and continued to have the same luck with but occasional interruptions. The other men, however, went on staking petty coins, and the two Ricardis in particular seemed quite annoyed if the Marchese failed to give them as much attention as he gave to Lieutenant Lorenzi. The two brothers played together upon the same hazard. Beads of perspiration formed upon the brow of the elder, who handled the cards. The younger, standing behind his brother, talked unceasingly, with the air of giving infallible counsel. When the silent brother won, the loquacious brother's eyes gleamed; but at a loss, he raised despairing eyes heavenward. The Abbate, impassive for the most part, occasionally enunciated some scrap of proverbial wisdom. For instance: "Luck and women cannot be constrained." Or, "The earth is round, and heaven is far away." At times he looked at Casanova with an air of sly encouragement, his eyes moving on from Casanova to rest upon Amalia where she sat beside her husband. It seemed as if his chief concern must be to bring the erstwhile lovers together once again.

As for Casanova, all he could think of was that Marcolina was in her room, undressing in leisurely fashion, and that if the window were open her white skin must be gleaming into the night. Seized with desire so intense as almost to put him beside himself, he moved to rise from his place by the Marchese and to leave the room. The Marchese, however, interpreting this movement as a resolve to take a hand in the game, said:

"At last! We were sure you would not be content to play the part of spectator, Chevalier."

The Marchese dealt him a card. Casanova staked all he had on his person, about ten ducats, which was nearly the whole of his entire wealth. Without counting the amount, he emptied his purse on the table, hoping to lose it at a single cast. That would be a sign of luck. He had not troubled to think precisely what sort of luck it would signify, whether his speedy return to Venice, or the desired sight of Marcolina's nudity. Ere he had made up his mind upon this point, the Marchese had lost the venture. Like Lorenzi, Casanova let the double stake lie; and just as in Lorenzi's case, fortune stood by him. The Marchese no longer troubled himself to deal to the others. The silent Ricardi rose somewhat mortified; the other Ricardi wrung his hands. Then the two withdrew, dumbfounded, to a corner of the room. The Abbate and Olivo took matters more phlegmatically. The former ate sweets and repeated his proverbial tags. The latter watched the turn of the cards with eager attention.

At length the Marchese had lost five hundred ducats to Casanova and Lorenzi. The Marchesa moved to depart, and looked significantly at the Lieutenant on her way out of the room. Amalia accompanied her guest. The Marchesa waddled in a manner that was extremely distasteful to Casanova. Amalia walked along beside her humbly and deprecatingly.

Now that the Marchese had lost all his ready cash, Casanova became banker, and, considerably to the Marchese's annoyance, he insisted that the others should return to the game. The brothers Ricardi eagerly accepted the invitation. The Abbate shook his head, saying he had had enough. Olivo played merely because he did not wish to be discourteous to his distinguished guest.

Lorenzi's luck held. When he had won four hundred ducats in all, he rose from the table, saying: "To-morrow I shall be happy to give you your revenge. But now, by your leave, I shall ride home."

"Home!" cried the Marchese with a scornful laugh — he had won back a few ducats by this time. "That is a strange way to phrase it!" He turned to the others: "The Lieutenant is staying with me. My wife has already driven home. I hope you'll have a pleasant time, Lorenzi!"

"You know perfectly well," rejoined Lorenzi imperturbably, "that I shall ride straight to Mantua, and not to your place, to which you were so good as to invite me yesterday."

"You can ride to bell for all I care!" said the other.

Lorenzi politely took his leave of the rest of the company, and, to Casanova's astonishment, departed without making any suitable retort to the Marchese.

Casanova went on with the game, still winning, so that the Marchese ere long was several hundred ducats in his debt. "What's the use of it all?" thought Casanova at first. But by degrees he was once more ensnared by the lure of the gaming table. "After all," he mused, "this is a lucky turn of fortune. I shall soon be a thousand to the good, perhaps even two thousand. The Marchese will not fail to pay his debt. It would be pleasant to take a modest competence with me to Venice. But why Venice? Who regains wealth, regains youth. Wealth is everything. At any rate, I shall now be able to buy her. Whom? The only woman I want.... She is standing naked at the window.... I am sure she is waiting there, expecting me to come.... She is standing at the window to drive me mad!"

All the same, with unruffled brow he continued dealing the cards, not only to the Marchese, but also to Olivo and to the brothers Ricardi. To the latter from time to time he pushed over a gold piece to which they had no claim, but which they accepted without comment. The noise of a trotting horse came from the road. "Lorenzi," thought Casanova. The hoofbeats echoed for a time from the garden wall, until sound and echo gradually died away.

At length Casanova's luck turned. The Marchese staked more and more boldly. By midnight Casanova was as poor as at the beginning; nay, poorer, for he had lost the few ducats with which he had made his first venture. Pushing the cards away, he stood up with a smile, saying: "Thank you, gentlemen, for a pleasant game."

Olivo stretched out both hands towards Casanova. "Dear friend, let us go on with the game..... You have a hundred and fifty ducats. Have you forgotten them? Not only a hundred and fifty ducats, but all that I have, everything, everything." His speech was thick, for he had been drinking throughout the evening.

Casanova signified his refusal with an exaggerated but courtly gesture. "Luck and women cannot be constrained," he said, bowing towards the Abbate, who nodded contentedly and clapped his hands.

"Till to-morrow, then, my dear Chevalier," said the Marchese. "We will join forces to win the money back from Lieutenant Lorenzi."

The brothers Ricardi insistently demanded that the game should continue. The Marchese, who was in a jovial mood, opened a bank for them. They staked the gold pieces which Casanova had allowed them to win. In a couple of minutes they had lost them all to the Marchese, who declined to go on playing unless they could produce cash. They wrung their hands. The elder began to cry like a child. The younger, to comfort his brother, kissed him on both cheeks. The Marchese enquired whether the carriage had returned, and the

Abbate said he had heard it drive up half an hour earlier. Thereupon the Marchese offered the Abbate and the two Ricardis a lift, promising to set them down at their doors. All four left the house together.

When they had gone, Olivo took Casanova by the arm, and assured his guest repeatedly, with tears in his voice, that everything in the house was at Casanova's absolute disposal. They walked past Marcolina's window. Not merely was the window closed, but the iron grating had been fastened; within, the window was curtained. There had been times, thought Casanova, when all these precautions had been unavailing, or had been without significance. They reëntered the house. Olivo would not be dissuaded from accompanying the guest up the creaking staircase into the turret chamber. He embraced Casanova as he bade him good-night.

"To-morrow," he said, "you shall see the nunnery. But sleep as late as you please. We are not early risers here; anyhow we shall adapt the hours to your convenience. Good-night!" He closed the door quietly, but his heavy tread resounded through the house.

CHAPTER FOUR.



THE ROOM IN which Casanova was now left to his own devices was dimly lighted by two candles. His gaze roamed successively to the four windows, looking to the four quarters of heaven. The prospect was much the same from them all. The landscape had a bluish sheen. He saw broad plains with no more than trifling elevations, except to the northward where the mountains were faintly visible. A few isolated houses, farms, and larger buildings, could be made out. Among these latter was one which stood higher than the rest. Here there was still a light in one of the windows, and Casanova imagined it must be the Marchese's mansion.

The furniture of the room was simple. The double bed stood straight out into the room. The two candles were on a long table. There were a few chairs, and a chest of drawers bearing a gilt-framed mirror. Everything was in perfect order, and the valise had been unpacked. On the table, locked, lay the shabby portfolio containing Casanova's papers. There were also some books which he was using in his work; writing materials had been provided.

He did not feel sleepy. Taking his manuscript out of the portfolio, he reread what he had last written. Since he had broken off in the middle of a sentence, it was easy for him to continue. He took up the pen, wrote a phrase or two, then paused.

"To what purpose?" he demanded of himself, as if in a cruel flash of inner illumination. "Even if I knew that what I am writing, what I am going to write, would be considered incomparably fine; even if I could really succeed in annihilating Voltaire, and in making my renown greater than his — would I not gladly commit these papers to the flames could I but have Marcolina in my arms? For that boon, should I not be willing to vow never to set foot in Venice again, even though the Venetians should wish to escort me back to the city in triumph?"

"Venice!"..... He breathed the word once more. Its splendor captivated his imagination, and in a moment its old power over him had been restored. The city of his youth rose before his eyes, enshrined in all the charms of memory. His heart ached with yearning more intense than any that he could recall. To renounce the idea of returning home seemed to him the most incredible of the sacrifices which his destiny might demand. How could he go on living in this poor and faded world without the hope, without the certainty, that he was one day to see the beloved city again? After the years and decades of wanderings and adventures, after all the happiness and unhappiness he had experienced, after all the honor and all the shame, after so many triumphs and so many discomfitures — he must at length find a resting place, must at length find a home.

Was there any other home for him than Venice? Was there any good fortune reserved for him other than this, that he should have a home once more? It was long since in foreign regions he had been able to command enduring happiness. He could still at times grasp happiness, but for a moment only; he could no longer hold it fast. His power over his fellows, over women no less than over men, had vanished. Only where he evoked memories could his words, his voice, his glance, still conjure; apart from this, his presence was void of interest. His day was done!

He was willing to admit what he had hitherto been sedulous to conceal from himself, that even his literary labors, including the polemic against Voltaire upon which his last hopes reposed, would never secure any notable success. Here, likewise, he was too late. Had he in youth but had leisure and patience to devote himself seriously to the work of the pen, he was confident he could have ranked with the leading members of the profession of authorship, with the greatest imaginative writers and philosophers. He was as sure of this as

he was sure that, granted more perseverance and foresight than he actually possessed, he could have risen to supreme eminence as financier or as diplomat.

But what availed his patience and his foresight, what became of all his plans in life, when the lure of a new love adventure summoned? Women, always women. For them he had again and again cast everything to the winds; sometimes for women who were refined, sometimes for women who were vulgar; for passionate women and for frigid women; for maidens and for harlots. All the honors and all the joys in the world had ever seemed cheap to him in comparison with a successful night upon a new love quest.

Did he regret what he had lost through his perpetual seeking and never or ever finding, through this earthly and superearthly flitting from craving to pleasure and from pleasure back to craving once more? No, he had no regrets. He had lived such a life as none other before him; and could he not still live it after his own fashion? Everywhere there remained women upon his path, even though they might no longer be quite so crazy about him as of old.

Amalia? He could have her for the asking, at this very hour, in her drunken husband's bed. The hostess in Mantua; was she not in love with him, fired with affection and jealousy as if he were a handsome lad? Perotti's mistress, pockmarked, but a woman with a fine figure? The very name of Casanova had intoxicated her with its aroma of a thousand conquests. Had she not implored him to grant her but a single night of love; and had he not spurned her as one who could still choose where he pleased?

But Marcolina — such as Marcolina were no longer at his disposal. Had such as Marcolina ever been at his disposal? Doubtless there were women of that kind. Perchance he had met more than one such woman before. Always, however, some more willing than she had been available, and he had never been the man to waste a day in vain sighing. Since not even Lorenzi had succeeded with Marcolina, since she had rejected the hand of this comely officer who was as handsome and as bold as he, Casanova, had been in youth, Marcolina might well prove to be that wonder of the world in the existence of which he had hitherto disbelieved — the virtuous woman.

At this juncture he laughed, so that the walls reëchoed. "The bungler, the greenhorn!" he exclaimed out loud, as so often in such self-communings. "He did not know how to make a good use of his opportunities. Or the Marchesa was hanging round his neck all the time. Or perhaps he took her as a next-best, when Marcolina, the philosopher, the woman of learning, proved unattainable!"

Suddenly a thought struck him. "To-morrow I will read her my polemic against Voltaire. I can think of no one else who would be a competent critic. I shall convince her. She will admire me. She will say: 'Excellent, Signor Casanova. Your style is that of a most brilliant old gentleman!' God!.... 'You have positively annihilated Voltaire, you brilliant senior!'"

He paced the chamber like a beast in a cage, hissing out the words in his anger. A terrible wrath possessed him, against Marcolina, against Voltaire, against himself, against the whole world. It was all he could do to restrain himself from roaring aloud in his rage. At length he threw himself upon the bed without undressing, and lay with eyes wide open, looking up at the joists among which spiders' webs were visible, glistening in the candlelight. Then, as often happened to him after playing cards late at night, pictures of cards chased one another swiftly through his brain, until he sank into a dreamless sleep.

His slumber was brief. When he awakened it was to a mysterious silence. The southern and the eastern windows of the turret chamber were open. Through them from the garden and the fields entered a complex of sweet odors. Gradually the silence was broken by the vague noises from near and from far which usually herald the dawn. Casanova could no longer lie quiet; a vigorous impulse towards movement gripped him, and lured him into the open. The song of the birds called to him; the cool breeze of early morning played upon his

brow. Softly he opened the door and moved cautiously down the stairs. Cunning, from long experience, he was able to avoid making the old staircase creak. The lower flight, leading to the ground floor, was of stone. Through the hall, where half-emptied glasses were still standing on the table, he made his way into the garden. Since it was impossible to walk silently on the gravel, he promptly stepped on to the greensward, which now, in the early twilight, seemed an area of vast proportions. He slipped into the side alley, from which he could see Marcolina's window. It was closed, barred, and curtained, just as it had been overnight. Barely fifty paces from the house, Casanova seated himself upon a stone bench. He heard a cart roll by on the other side of the wall, and then everything was quiet again. A fine grey haze was floating over the greensward, giving it the aspect of a pond with fugitive outlines. Once again Casanova thought of that night long ago in the convent garden at Murano; he thought of another garden on another night; he hardly knew what memories he was recalling; perchance it was a composite reminiscence of a hundred nights, just as at times a hundred women whom he had loved would fuse in memory into one figure that loomed enigmatically before his questioning senses. After all, was not one night just like another? Was not one woman just like another? Especially when the affair was past and gone? The phrase, "past and gone," continued to hammer upon his temples, as if destined henceforth to become the pulse of his forlorn existence.

It seemed to him that something was rattling behind him along the wall. Or was it only an echo that he heard? Yes, the noise had really come from the house. Marcolina's window had suddenly been opened, the iron grating had been pushed back, the curtain drawn. A shadowy form was visible against the dark interior. Marcolina, clad in a white nightdress, was standing at the window, as if to breathe the fragrance of morning. In an instant, Casanova slipped behind the bench. Peeping over the top of it, through the foliage in the avenue, he watched Marcolina as if spellbound. She stood unthinking, it seemed, her gaze vaguely piercing the twilight. Not until several seconds had elapsed did she appear to collect herself, to grow fully awake and aware, directing her eyes slowly, now to right and now to left. Then she leaned forward, as if seeking for something on the gravel, and next she turned her head, from which her hair was hanging loosely, and looked up towards the windows in the upper story. Thereafter, she stood motionless for a while, supporting herself with a hand on either side of the window-frame as though she were fastened to an invisible cross. Now at length, suddenly illumined as it were from within, her features grew plain to Casanova's vision. A smile flitted across her face. Her arms fell to her sides; her lips moved strangely, as if whispering a prayer; once more she looked searchingly across the garden, then nodded almost imperceptibly, and at the instant someone who must hitherto have been crouching at her feet swung across the sill into the open. It was Lorenzi. He flew rather than walked across the gravel into the alley, which he crossed barely ten yards from Casanova, who held his breath as he lay behind the bench. Lorenzi, hastening on, made his way down a narrow strip of grass running along the wall, and disappeared from view. Casanova heard a door groan on its hinges — the very door doubtless through which he, Olivo, and the Marchese had reëntered the garden on the previous day — and then all was still. Marcolina had remained motionless. As soon as she knew that Lorenzi was safely away, she drew a deep breath, and closed grating and window. The curtain fell back into its place, and all was as it had been. Except for one thing; for now, as if there were no longer any reason for delay, day dawned over house and garden.

Casanova was still lying behind the bench, his arms outstretched before him. After a while he crept on all fours to the middle of the alley, and thence onward till he reached a place where he could not be seen from Marcolina's window or from any of the others. Rising to his feet with an aching back, he stretched body and limbs, and felt himself restored to his senses, as though re-transformed from a whipped hound into a human being — doomed to feel the chastisement, not as bodily pain, but as profound humiliation.

“Why,” he asked himself, “did I not go to the window while it was still open? Why did I not leap over the sill? Could she have offered any resistance; would she have dared to do so; hypocrite, liar, strumpet?”

He continued to rail at her as though he had a right to do so, as though he had been her lover to whom she had plighted troth and whom she had betrayed. He swore to question her face to face; to denounce her before Olivo, Amalia, the Marchese, the Abbate, the servants, as nothing better than a lustful little whore. As if for practice, he recounted to himself in detail what he had just witnessed, delighting in the invention of incidents which would degrade her yet further. He would say that she had stood naked at the window; that she had permitted the unchaste caresses of her lover while the morning wind played upon them both.

After thus allaying the first vehemence of his anger, he turned to consider whether he might not make a better use of his present knowledge. Was she not in his power? Could he not now exact by threats the favors which she had not been willing to grant him for love? But this infamous design was speedily abandoned; not so much because Casanova realized its infamy, as because, even while the plan crossed his mind, he was aware of its futility. Why should Marcolina, accountable to no one but herself, be concerned at his threats? In the last resort she was astute enough, if needs must, to have him driven from the house as a slanderer and blackmailer. Even if, for one reason or another, she were willing to give herself to him in order to preserve the secret of her amours with Lorenzi (he was aware that he was speculating on something beyond the bounds of possibility), a pleasure thus extorted would become for him a nameless torment. Casanova knew himself to be one whose rapture in a love relationship was a thousandfold greater when conferring pleasure than when receiving it. Such a victory as he was contemplating would drive him to frenzy and despair.

Suddenly he found himself at the door in the garden wall. It was locked. Then Lorenzi had a master-key! But who, it now occurred to him to ask, had ridden the horse he had heard trotting away after Lorenzi had left the card table? A servant in waiting for the purpose, obviously.

Involuntarily Casanova smiled his approval. They were worthy of one another, these two, Marcolina and Lorenzi, the woman philosopher and the officer. A splendid career lay before them.

“Who will be Marcolina’s next lover?” he thought questioningly. “The professor in Bologna in whose house she lives? Fool, fool! That is doubtless an old story. Who next? Olivo? The Abbate? Wherefore not? Or the serving-lad who stood gaping at the door yesterday when we drove up? She has given herself to all of them. I am sure of it. But Lorenzi does not know. I have stolen a march on him there.”

Yet all the while he was inwardly convinced that Lorenzi was Marcolina’s first lover. Nay, he even suspected that the previous night was the first on which she had given herself to Lorenzi. Nevertheless, as he made the circuit in the garden within the wall, he continued to indulge these spiteful, lascivious fantasies.

At length he reached the hall door, which he had left open. He must regain the turret chamber unseen and unheard. With all possible caution he crept upstairs, and sank into the armchair which stood in front of the table. The loose leaves of the manuscript seemed to have been awaiting his return. Involuntarily his eyes fell upon the sentence in the middle of which he had broken off. He read: “Voltaire will doubtless prove immortal. But this immortality will have been purchased at the price of his immortal part. Wit has consumed his heart just as doubt has consumed his soul, and therefore.....”

At this moment the morning sun flooded the chamber with red light, so that the page in his hand glowed. As if vanquished, he laid it on the table beside the others. Suddenly aware that his lips were dry, he poured himself a glass of water from the carafe on the table; the drink was lukewarm and sweetish to the taste. Nauseated, he turned his head away from the glass, and found himself facing his image in the mirror upon the chest of drawers. A wan, aging countenance with dishevelled hair stared back at him. In a self-tormenting mood he allowed the corners of his mouth to droop as if he were playing the part of pantaloon on the stage;

disarranged his hair yet more wildly; put out his tongue at his own image in the mirror; croaked a string of inane invectives against himself; and finally, like a naughty child, blew the leaves of his manuscript from the table on to the floor.

Then he began to rail against Marcolina again. He loaded her with obscene epithets. “Do you imagine,” he hissed between his teeth, “that your pleasure will last? You will become fat and wrinkled and old just like the other women who were young when you were young. You will be an old woman with flaccid breasts; your hair will be dry and grizzled; you will be toothless, you will have a bad smell. Last of all you will die. Perhaps you will die while you are still quite young. You will become a mass of corruption, food for worms.”

To wreak final vengeance upon her, he endeavored to picture her as dead. He saw her lying in an open coffin, wrapped in a white shroud. But he was unable to attach to her image any sign of decay, and her unearthly beauty aroused him to renewed frenzy. Through his closed eyelids he saw the coffin transform itself into a nuptial bed. Marcolina lay laughing there with lambent eyes. As if in mockery, with her small, white hands she unveiled her firm little breasts. But as he stretched forth his arms towards her, in the moment when he was about to clasp her in his passionate embrace, the vision faded.

CHAPTER FIVE.



SOMEONE WAS KNOCKING at the door. Casanova awoke from a heavy sleep to find Olivo standing before him.

"At your writing so early?"

Casanova promptly collected his wits. "It is my custom," he said, "to work the first thing in the morning. What time is it?"

"Eight o'clock," answered Olivo. "Breakfast is ready in the garden. We will start on our drive to the nunnery as early as you please, Chevalier. How the wind has blown your papers about!"

He stooped to pick up the fallen leaves. Casanova did not interfere. He had moved to the window, and was looking down upon the breakfast table which had been set on the greensward in the shade of the house. Amalia, Marcolina, and the three young girls, dressed in white, were at breakfast. They called up a good-morning. He had no eyes for anyone but Marcolina, who smiled at him frankly and in the friendliest fashion. In her lap was a plateful of early-ripe grapes, which she was eating deliberately.

Contempt, anger, and hatred vanished from Casanova's heart. All he knew was that he loved her. Made drunken by the very sight of her, he turned away from the window to find Olivo on hands and knees still assembling the scattered pages of manuscript from under the table and chest of drawers. "Don't trouble any further," he said to his host. "Leave me to myself for a moment while I get ready for the drive."

"No hurry," answered Olivo, rising, and brushing the dust from his knees. "We shall easily be home in time for dinner. We want to get back early, anyhow, for the Marchese would like us to begin cards soon after our meal. I suppose he wants to leave before sunset."

"It doesn't matter to me what time you begin cards," said Casanova, as he arranged his manuscript in the portfolio. "Whatever happens, I shall not take a hand in the game."

"Yes you will," explained Olivo with a decision foreign to his usual manner. Laying a roll of gold pieces on the table, he continued: "Thus do I pay my debt, Chevalier. A belated settlement, but it comes from a grateful heart." Casanova made a gesture of refusal.

"I insist," said Olivo. "If you do not take the money, you will wound us deeply. Besides, last night Amalia had a dream which will certainly induce you — but I will let her tell the story herself." He turned and left the room precipitately.

Casanova counted the money. Yes, there were one hundred and fifty gold pieces, the very sum that fifteen years earlier he had presented to the bridegroom, the bride, or the bride's mother — he had forgotten which.

"The best thing I could do," he mused, "would be to pack up the money, say farewell to Olivo and Amalia, and leave the place at once, if possible without seeing Marcolina again. Yet when was I ever guided by reason? — I wonder if news has reached Mantua from Venice? But my good hostess promised to forward without fail anything that might arrive."

The maid meanwhile had brought a large earthenware pitcher filled with water freshly drawn from the spring. Casanova sponged himself all over. Greatly refreshed, he dressed in his best suit, the one he had intended to wear the previous evening had there been time to change. Now, however, he was delighted that he would be able to appear before Marcolina better clad than on the previous day, to present himself in a new form as it were.

So he sauntered into the garden wearing a coat of grey satin richly embroidered and trimmed with Spanish lace; a yellow waistcoat; and knee-breeches of cherry-colored silk. His aspect was that of a man who was

distinguished without being proud. An amiable smile played about his lips, and his eyes sparkled with the fire of inextinguishable youth. To his disappointment, he found no one but Olivo, who bade him be seated, and invited him to fall to upon the modest fare. Casanova's breakfast consisted of bread, butter, milk, and eggs, followed by peaches and grapes, which seemed to him the finest he had ever eaten. Now the three girls came running across the lawn. Casanova kissed them in turn, bestowing on the thirteen-year-old Teresina such caresses as the Abbate had been free with on the previous day. Her eyes gleamed in a way with which Casanova was familiar. He was convinced this meant something more to her than childish amusement.

Olivo was delighted to see how well the Chevalier got on with the girls. "Must you really leave us to-morrow morning?" he enquired tentatively. "This very evening," rejoined Casanova jovially. "You know, my dear Olivo, I must consider the wishes of the Venetian senators...."

"How have they earned the right to any such consideration from you?" broke in Olivo. "Let them wait. Stay here for another two days at least; or, better still, for a week."

Casanova slowly shook his head. He had seized Teresina's hands, and held her prisoner between his knees. She drew herself gently away, with a smile no longer that of a child. At this moment Amalia and Marcolina emerged from the house. Olivo besought them to second his invitation. But when neither found a word to say on the matter, Casanova's voice and expression assumed an unduly severe emphasis as he answered: "Quite out of the question."

On the way through the chestnut avenue to the road, Marcolina asked Casanova whether he had made satisfactory progress with the polemic. Olivo had told her that his guest had been at the writing-table since early morning.

Casanova was half inclined to make an answer that would have been malicious in its ambiguity, and would have startled his auditor without betraying himself. Reflecting, however, that premature advances could do his cause nothing but harm, he held his wit in leash, and civilly rejoined that he had been content to make a few emendations, the fruit of his conversation with her yesterday.

Now they all seated themselves in the lumbering carriage. Casanova sat opposite Marcolina, Olivo opposite Amalia. The vehicle was so roomy that, notwithstanding the inevitable joltings, the inmates were not unduly jostled one against the other. Casanova begged Amalia to tell him her dream. She smiled cordially, almost brightly, no longer displaying any trace of mortification or resentment.

"In my dream, Casanova, I saw you driving past a white building in a splendid carriage drawn by six chestnut horses. Or rather, the carriage pulled up in front of this building, and at first I did not know who was seated inside. Then you got out. You were wearing a magnificent white court dress embroidered with gold, so that your appearance was almost more resplendent than it is to-day." Her tone conveyed a spice of gentle mockery. "You were wearing, I am sure of it, the thin gold chain you are wearing to-day, and yet I had never seen it until this morning!" This chain, with the gold watch and gold snuff-box set with garnets (Casanova was fingering it as she spoke), were the only trinkets of value still left to him. "An old man, looking like a beggar, opened the carriage door. It was Lorenzi. As for you, Casanova, you were young, quite young, younger even than you seemed to me in those days." She said "in those days" quite unconcernedly, regardless of the fact that in the train of these words all her memories came attendant, winging their way like a flight of birds. "You bowed right and left, although there was not a soul within sight; then you entered the house. The door slammed to behind you. I did not know whether the storm had slammed it, or Lorenzi. So startling was the noise that the horses took fright and galloped away with the carriage. Then came a clamor from neighboring streets, as if people were trying to save themselves from being run over; but soon all was quiet again. Next I saw you at one of the windows. Now I knew it was a gaming-house. Once more you bowed in

all directions, though the whole time there was no one to be seen. You looked over your shoulder, as if someone were standing behind you in the room; but I knew that no one was there. Now, of a sudden, I saw you at another window, in a higher story, where the same gestures were repeated. Then higher still, and higher, and yet higher, as if the building were piled story upon story, interminably. From each window in succession, you bowed towards the street, and then turned to speak to persons behind you — who were not really there at all. Lorenzi, meanwhile, kept on running up the stairs, flight after flight, but was never able to overtake you. He wanted you because you had forgotten to give him a gratuity....."

"What next?" enquired Casanova, when Amalia paused.

"There was a great deal more, but I have forgotten," said Amalia.

Casanova was disappointed. In such cases, whether he was relating a dream or giving an account of real incidents, it was his way to round off the narrative, attempting to convey a meaning. He remarked discontentedly: "How strangely everything is distorted in dreams. Fancy, that I should be wealthy; and that Lorenzi should be a beggar, and old!"

"As far as Lorenzi is concerned," interjected Olivo, "there is not much wealth about him. His father is fairly well off, but no one can say that of the son."

Casanova had no need to ask questions. He was speedily informed that it was through the Marchese that they had made the Lieutenant's acquaintance. The Marchese had brought Lorenzi to the house only a few weeks before. A man of the Chevalier's wide experience would hardly need prompting to enlighten him as to the nature of the young officer's relationship to the Marchesa. After all, if the husband had no objection, the affair was nobody else's business.

"I think, Olivo," said Casanova, "that you have allowed yourself to be convinced of the Marchese's complaisance too easily. Did you not notice his manner towards the young man, the mingling of contempt and ferocity? I should not like to wager that all will end well."

Marcolina remained impassive. She seemed to pay no attention to this talk about Lorenzi, but sat with unruffled countenance, and to all appearance quietly delighting in the landscape. The road led upwards by a gentle ascent zigzagging through groves of olives and holly trees. Now they reached a place where the horses had to go more slowly, and Casanova alighted to stroll beside the carriage. Marcolina talked of the lovely scenery round Bologna, and of the evening walks she was in the habit of taking with Professor Morgagni's daughter. She also mentioned that she was planning a journey to France next year, in order to make the personal acquaintance of Saugrenue, the celebrated mathematician at the university of Paris, with whom she had corresponded. "Perhaps," she said with a smile, "I may look in at Ferney on the way, in order to learn from Voltaire's own lips how he has been affected by the polemic of the Chevalier de Seingalt, his most formidable adversary."

Casanova was walking with a hand on the side of the carriage, close to Marcolina's arm. Her loose sleeve was touching his fingers. He answered quietly: "It matters less what M. Voltaire thinks about the matter than what posterity thinks. A final decision upon the merits of the controversy must be left to the next generation."

"Do you really think," said Marcolina earnestly, "that final decisions can be reached in questions of this character?"

"I am surprised that you should ask such a thing, Marcolina. Though your philosophic views, and (if the term be appropriate) your religious views, seem to me by no means irrefutable, at least they must be firmly established in your soul — if you believe that there is a soul."

Marcolina, ignoring the personal animus in Casanova's words, sat looking skyward over the tree-crests, and tranquilly rejoined: "Ofttimes, and especially on a day like this" — to Casanova, knowing what he knew,

the words conveyed the thrill of reverence in the newly awakened heart of a woman— “I feel as if all that people speak of as philosophy and religion were no more than playing with words. A sport nobler perhaps than others, nevertheless more unmeaning than them all. Infinity and eternity will never be within the grasp of our understanding. Our path leads from birth to death. What else is left for us than to live a life accordant with the law that each of us bears within — or a life of rebellion against that law? For rebellion and submissiveness both issue from God.”

Olivo looked at his niece with timid admiration, then turned to contemplate Casanova with some anxiety. Casanova was in search of a rejoinder which should convince Marcolina that she was in one breath affirming and denying God, or should prove to her that she was proclaiming God and the Devil to be the same. He realized, however, that he had nothing but empty words to set against her feelings, and to-day words did not come to him readily. His expression showed him to be somewhat at a loss, and apparently reminded Amalia of the confused menaces he had uttered on the previous day. So she hastened to remark: “Marcolina is deeply religious all the same, I can assure you, Chevalier.”

Marcolina smiled.

“We are all religious in our several ways,” said Casanova civilly.

Now came a turn in the road, and the nunnery was in sight. The slender tops of cypresses showed above the encircling wall. At the sound of the approaching carriage, the great doors had swung open. The porter, an old man with a flowing white beard, bowed gravely and gave them admittance. Through the cloisters, between the columns of which they caught glimpses of an overgrown garden, they advanced towards the main building, from whose unadorned, grey, and prison-like exterior an unpleasantly cool air was wafted. Olivo pulled the bellrope; the answering sound was high-pitched, and died away in a moment. A veiled nun silently appeared, and ushered the guests into the spacious parlor. It contained merely a few plain wooden chairs, and the back was cut off by a heavy iron grating, beyond which nothing could be seen but a vague darkness.

With bitterness in his heart, Casanova recalled the adventure which still seemed to him the most wonderful of all his experiences. It had begun in just such surroundings as the present. Before his eyes loomed the forms of the two inmates of the Murano convent who had been friends in their love for him. In conjunction they had bestowed upon him hours of incomparable sweetness. When Olivo, in a whisper, began to speak of the strict discipline imposed upon this sisterhood — once they were professed, the nuns must never appear unveiled before a man, and they were vowed to perpetual silence — a smile flitted across Casanova’s face.

The Abbess suddenly emerged from the gloom, and was standing in their midst. In silence she saluted her guests, and with an exaggerated reverence of her veiled head acknowledged Casanova’s expressions of gratitude for the admission of himself, a stranger. But when Marcolina wished to kiss her hand, the Abbess gathered the girl in her arms. Then, with a wave of the hand inviting them to follow, she led the way through a small room into a cloister surrounding a quadrangular flower-garden. In contrast to the outer garden, which had run wild, this inner garden was tended with especial care. The flower-beds, brilliant in the sunshine, showed a wonderful play of variegated colors. The warm odors were almost intoxicating. One, intermingled with the rest, aroused no responsive echo in Casanova’s memory. Puzzled, he was about to say a word on the subject to Marcolina, when he perceived that the enigmatic, stimulating fragrance emanated from herself. She had removed her shawl from her shoulders and was carrying it over her arm. From the opening of her gown came a perfume at once kindred to that of the thousand flowers of the garden, and yet unique.

The Abbess, still without a word, conducted the visitors between the flower-beds upon narrow, winding paths which traversed the garden like a lovely labyrinth. The graceful ease of her gait showed that she was

enjoying the chance of showing others the motley splendors of her garden. As if she had determined to make her guests giddy, she moved on faster and ever faster like the leader of a lively folk-dance. Then, quite suddenly, so that Casanova seemed to awaken from a confusing dream, they all found themselves in the parlor once more. On the other side of the grating, dim figures were moving. It was impossible to distinguish whether, behind the thick bars, three or five or twenty veiled women were flitting to and fro like startled ghosts. Indeed, none but Casanova, with eyes preternaturally acute to pierce the darkness, could discern that they were human outlines at all.

The Abbess attended her guests to the door, mutely gave them a sign of farewell, and vanished before they had found time to express their thanks for her courtesy.

Suddenly, just as they were about to leave the parlor, a woman's voice near the grating breathed the word "Casanova." Nothing but his name, in a tone that seemed to him quite unfamiliar. From whom came this breach of a sacred vow? Was it a woman he had once loved, or a woman he had never seen before? Did the syllables convey the ecstasy of an unexpected reencounter, or the pain of something irrecoverably lost; or did it convey the lamentation that an ardent wish of earlier days had been so late and so fruitlessly fulfilled? Casanova could not tell. All that he knew was that his name, which had so often voiced the whispers of tender affection, the stammerings of passion, the acclamations of happiness, had to-day for the first time pierced his heart with the full resonance of love. But, for this very reason, to probe the matter curiously would have seemed to him ignoble and foolish. The door closed behind the party, shutting in a secret which he was never to unriddle. Were it not that the expression on each face had shown timidly and fugitively that the call to Casanova had reached the ears of all, each might have fancied himself or herself a prey to illusion. No one uttered a word as they walked through the cloisters to the great doors. Casanova brought up the rear, with bowed head, as if on the occasion of some profoundly affecting farewell.

The porter was waiting. He received his alms. The visitors stepped into the carriage, and started on the homeward road. Olivo seemed perplexed; Amalia was distrait. Marcolina, however, was quite unmoved. Too pointedly, in Casanova's estimation, she attempted to engage Amalia in a discussion of household affairs, a topic upon which Olivo was compelled to come to his wife's assistance. Casanova soon joined in the discussion, which turned upon matters relating to kitchen and cellar. An expert on these topics, he saw no reason why he should hide his light under a bushel, and he seized the opportunity of giving a fresh proof of versatility. Thereupon, Amalia roused herself from her brown study. After their recent experience — at once incredible and haunting — to all, and especially to Casanova, there was a certain comfort derivable from an extremely commonplace atmosphere of mundane life. When the carriage reached home, where an inviting odor of roast meat and cooking vegetables assailed their nostrils, Casanova was in the midst of an appetizing description of a Polish pasty, a description to which even Marcolina attended with a flattering air of domesticity.

CHAPTER SIX



IN A STRANGELY tranquillized, almost happy mood, which was a surprise to himself, Casanova sat at table with the others, and paid court to Marcolina in the sportive manner which might seem appropriate from a distinguished elderly gentleman towards a well-bred young woman of the burgher class. She accepted his attentions gracefully, in the spirit in which they appeared to be offered. He found it difficult to believe that his demure neighbor was the same Marcolina from whose bedroom window he had seen a young officer emerge, a man who had obviously held her in his arms but a few moments earlier. It was equally difficult for him to realize how this tender girl, who was fond of romping on the grass with other children, could conduct a learned correspondence with Saugrenue, the renowned mathematician of Paris. Yet simultaneously he derided himself for the inertness of his imagination. Had he not learned a thousand times that in the souls of all persons who are truly alive, discrepant elements, nay, apparently hostile elements, may coexist in perfect harmony? He himself, who shortly before had been so profoundly moved, had been desperate, had been ready for evil deeds, was now so gentle, so kindly, in so merry a mood, that Olivo's little daughters were shaking their sides with laughter. Nevertheless, as was usual with him after strong excitement, his appetite was positively ferocious, and this served to warn him that order was not yet fully restored in his soul.

With the last course, the maid brought in a despatch which had just arrived for the Chevalier by special messenger from Mantua. Olivo noticed that Casanova grew pale. He told the servant to provide the messenger with refreshment, then turned to his guest.

"Pray don't stand upon ceremony, Chevalier. Read your letter."

"If you will excuse me," answered Casanova. He went to the window and opened the missive with simulated indifference. It was from Signor Bragadino, an old friend of the family and a confirmed bachelor, over eighty years of age, and for the last decade a member of the Supreme Council. He had shown more interest than other patrons in pressing Casanova's suit. The letter was beautifully written, although the characters were a little shaky. It was as follows:

"My dear Casanova:

"I am delighted, at length, to be able to send you news which will, I hope, be substantially accordant with your wishes. The Supreme Council, at its last sitting, which took place yesterday evening, did not merely express its willingness to permit your return to Venice. It went further. The Council desires that your advent should be as speedy as possible, since there is an intention to turn to immediate account the active gratitude which you have foreshadowed in so many of your letters.

"Since Venice has been deprived for so long of the advantage of your presence, you may perhaps be unaware, my dear Casanova, that quite recently the internal affairs of our beloved native city have taken a rather unfavorable trend both politically and morally. Secret societies have come into existence, directed against the constitution of the Venetian state, and even, it would seem, aiming at its forcible overthrow. As might be expected, the members of these societies, persons whom it would not be too harsh to denominate conspirators, are chiefly drawn from certain free-thinking, irreligious, and lawless circles. Not to speak of what goes on in private, we learn that in the public squares and in coffee houses, the most outrageous, the most treasonable conversations, take place. But only in exceptional instances has it been possible to catch the guilty in the act, or to secure definite proof against the offenders. A few admissions have been enforced by the rack, but these confessions have proved so untrustworthy that several members of the Council are of opinion

that for the future it would be better to abstain from methods of investigation which are not only cruel but are apt to lead us astray. Of course there is no lack of individuals well-affected towards public order and devoted to the welfare of the state, individuals who would be delighted to place their services at the disposal of the government; but most of them are so well known as stalwart supporters of the existing constitution that when they are present people are chary in their utterances and are most unlikely to give vent to treasonable expressions.

"At yesterday's sitting, one of the senators, whom I will not name, expressed the opinion that a man who had the reputation of being without moral principle and who was furthermore regarded as a freethinker — in short, Casanova, such a man as yourself — if recalled to Venice would not fail to secure prompt and sympathetic welcome in the very circles which the government regards with such well-grounded suspicion. If he played his cards well, such a man would soon inspire the most absolute confidence.

"In my opinion, irresistibly, and as if by the force of a law of nature, there would gravitate around your person the very elements which the Supreme Council, in its indefatigable zeal for the state, is most eager to render harmless and to punish in an exemplary manner. For your part, my dear Casanova, you would give us an acceptable proof of your patriotic zeal, and would furnish in addition an infallible sign of your complete conversion from all those tendencies for which, during your imprisonment in The Leads, you had to atone by punishment which, though severe, was not, as you now see for yourself (if we are to believe your epistolary assurances), altogether unmerited. I mean, should you be prepared, immediately on your return home, to act in the way previously suggested, to seek acquaintance with the elements sufficiently specified above, to introduce yourself to them in the friendliest fashion as one who cherishes the same tendencies, and to furnish the Senate with accurate and full reports of everything which might seem to you suspicious or worthy of note.

"For these services the authorities would offer you, to begin with, a salary of two hundred and fifty lire per month, apart from special payments in cases of exceptional importance. I need hardly say that you would receive in addition, without too close a scrutiny of the items, an allowance for such expenses as you might incur in the discharge of your duties (I refer, for instance, to the treating of this individual or of that, little gifts made to women, and so on).

"I do not attempt to conceal from myself that you may have to fight down certain scruples before you will feel inclined to fulfil our wishes. Permit me, however, as your old and sincere friend (who was himself young once), to remind you that it can never be regarded as dishonorable for a man to perform any services that may be essential for the safety of his beloved fatherland — even if, to a shallow-minded and unpatriotic citizen, such services might seem to be of an unworthy character. Let me add, Casanova, that your knowledge of human nature will certainly enable you to draw a distinction between levity and criminality, to differentiate the jester from the heretic. Thus it will be within your power, in appropriate cases, to temper justice with mercy, and to deliver up to punishment those only who, in your honest opinion, may deserve it.

"Above all I would ask you to consider that, should you reject the gracious proposal of the Supreme Council, the fulfilment of your dearest wish — your return to Venice — is likely to be postponed for a long and I fear for an indefinite period; and that I myself, if I may allude to the matter, as an old man of eighty-one, should be compelled in all human probability to renounce the pleasing prospect of ever seeing you again in this life.

"Since, for obvious reasons, your appointment will be of a confidential and not of a public nature, I beg you to address to me personally your reply, for which I make myself responsible, and which I wish to present to the Council at its next sitting a week hence. Act with all convenient speed, for, as I have previously explained, we are daily receiving offers from thoroughly trustworthy persons who, from patriotic motives,

voluntarily place themselves at the disposal of the Supreme Council. Nevertheless, there is hardly one among them who can compare with you, my dear Casanova, in respect of experience or intelligence. If, in addition to all the arguments I have adduced, you take my personal feelings into account, I find it difficult to doubt that you will gladly respond to the call which now reaches you from so exalted and so friendly a source.

"Till then, receive the assurances of my undying friendship.

"BRAGADINO."

"Postscript. Immediately upon receipt of your acceptance, it will be a pleasure to me to send you a remittance of two hundred lire through the banking firm of Valori in Mantua. The sum is to defray the cost of your journey.

"B."

Long after Casanova had finished reading the letter, he stood holding the paper so as to conceal the deathly pallor of his countenance. From the dining-table came a continuous noise, the rattle of plates and the clinking of glasses; but conversation had entirely ceased. At length Amalia ventured to say: "The food is getting cold, Chevalier; won't you go on with your meal?"

"You must excuse me," replied Casanova, letting his face be seen once more, for by now, owing to his extraordinary self-control, he had regained outward composure. "I have just received the best possible news from Venice, and I must reply instantly. With your leave, I will go to my room."

"Suit yourself, Chevalier," said Olivo. "But do not forget that our card party begins in an hour."

In the turret chamber Casanova sank into a chair. A chill sweat broke out over his body; he shivered as if in the cold stage of a fever; he was seized with such nausea that he felt as if he were about to choke. For a time he was unable to think clearly, and he could do no more than devote his energies to the task of self-restraint without quite knowing why he did so. But there was no one in the house upon whom he could vent his fury; and he could not fail to realize the utter absurdity of a half-formed idea that Marcolina must be in some way contributory to the intolerable shame which had been put upon him.

As soon as he was in some degree once more master of himself, his first thought was to take revenge upon the scoundrels who had believed that he could be hired as a police spy. He would return to Venice in disguise, and would exert all his cunning to compass the death of these wretches — or at least of whomever it was that had conceived the despicable design.

Was Bragadino the prime culprit? Why not? An old man so lost to all sense of shame that he had dared to write such a letter to Casanova; a dotard who could actually believe that Casanova, whom he had personally known, would set his hand to this ignominious task. He no longer knew Casanova! Nor did anyone know him, in Venice or elsewhere. But people should learn to know him once more.

It was true that he was no longer young enough or handsome enough to seduce an honest girl. Nor did he now possess the skill and the agility requisite for an escape from prison, or for gymnastic feats upon the roof-tops. But in spite of his age, he was cleverer than anyone else! Once back in Venice, he could do anything he pleased. The first step, the essential step, was to get back. Perhaps it would not be necessary to kill anyone. There were other kinds of revenge, grimmer, more devilish, than a commonplace murder. If he were to feign acceptance of the Council's proposal, it would be the easiest thing in the world to compass the destruction of those whom he wished to destroy, instead of bringing about the ruin of those whom the authorities had in mind, and who were doubtless the finest fellows among all the inhabitants of Venice! Monstrous! Because they were the enemies of this infamous government, because they were reputed heretics, were they to languish in The Leads where he had languished twenty-five years ago, or were they to perish under the

executioner's axe? He detested the government a hundred times more than they did, and with better reason. He had been a lifelong heretic; was a heretic to-day, upon sincerer conviction than them all. What a queer comedy he had been playing of late years — simply from tedium and disgust. He to believe in God? What sort of a God was it who was gracious only to the young, and left the old in the lurch? A God who, when the fancy took him, became a devil; who transformed wealth into poverty, fortune into misfortune, happiness into despair. "You play with us — and we are to worship you? To doubt your existence is the only resource left open to us if we are not to blaspheme you! You do not exist; for if you did exist, I should curse you!"

Shaking his clenched fists heavenward, he rose to his feet. Involuntarily, a detested name rose to his lips. Voltaire! Yes, now he was in the right mood to finish his polemic against the sage of Ferney. To finish it? No, now was the time to begin it. A new one! A different one! One in which the ridiculous old fool should be shown up as he deserved: for his pusillanimity, his half-heartedness, his subservience. He an unbeliever? A man of whom the latest news was that he was on excellent terms with the priests, that he visited church, and on feast days actually went to confession! He a heretic? He was a chatterbox, a boastful coward, nothing more! But the day of reckoning was at hand, and soon there would be nothing left of the great philosopher but a quill-driving buffoon.

What airs he had given himself, this worthy M. Voltaire! "My dear M. Casanova, I am really vexed with you. What concern have I with the works of Merlin? It is your fault that I have wasted four hours over such nonsense."

All a matter of taste, excellent M. Voltaire! People will continue to read Merlin long after *La Pucelle* has been forgotten. Possibly they will continue to prize my sonnets, the sonnets you returned to me with a shameless smile, and without saying a word about them. But these are trifles. Do not let us spoil a great opportunity because of our sensitiveness as authors. We are concerned with philosophy — with God! We shall cross swords, M. Voltaire, unless you die before I have a chance to deal with you.

He was already in the mind to begin his new polemic, when it occurred to him that the messenger was waiting for an answer. He hastily indited a letter to the old duffer Bragadino, a letter full of hypocritical humility and simulated delight. With joy and gratitude he accepted the pardon of the Council. He would expect the remittance by return of post, so that with all possible speed he might present himself before his patrons, and above all before the honored old family friend, Bragadino.

When he was in the act of sealing the letter, someone knocked gently at the door. At the word, Olivo's eldest daughter, the thirteen-year-old Teresina, entered, to tell him that the whole company was assembled below, and that the Chevalier was impatiently awaited at the card table. Her eyes gleamed strangely; her cheeks were flushed; her thick, black hair lay loose upon her temples; her little mouth was half open.

"Have you been drinking wine, Teresina?" asked Casanova striding towards her.

"Yes. How did you know?" She blushed deeper, and in her embarrassment she moistened her lips with her tongue.

Casanova seized her by the shoulders, and, breathing in her face, drew her to the bed. She looked at him with great helpless eyes in which the light was now extinguished. But when she opened her mouth as if to scream, Casanova's aspect was so menacing that she was almost paralyzed with fear, and let him do whatever he pleased.

He kissed her with a tender fierceness, whispering: "You must not tell the Abbate anything about this, Teresina, not even in confession. Some day, when you have a lover or a husband, there is no reason why he should know anything about it. You should always keep your own counsel. Never tell the truth to your father, your mother, or your sisters, that it may be well with you on earth. Mark my words." As he spoke thus

blasphemously, Teresina seemed to regard his utterance as a pious admonition, for she seized his hand and kissed it reverently as if it had been a priest's.

He laughed. "Come," he said, "come, little wife, we will walk arm in arm into the room downstairs!"

She seemed a little coy at first, but smiled with genuine gratification.

It was high time for them to go down, for they met Olivo coming up. He was flushed and wore a frown, so that Casanova promptly inferred that the Marchese or the Abbate had roused his suspicions by some coarse jest concerning Teresina's prolonged absence. His brow cleared when he beheld Casanova on the threshold, standing arm in arm with the girl as if in sport.

"I'm sorry to have kept you all waiting, Olivo," said Casanova. "I had to finish my letter." He held the missive out to Olivo in proof of his words.

"Take it," said Olivo to Teresina, smoothing her rumpled hair. "Hand it to the messenger."

"Here are two gold pieces for the man," added Casanova. "He must bestir himself, so that the letter may leave Mantua for Venice to-day. And ask him to tell my hostess at the inn that I shall return this evening."

"This evening?" exclaimed Olivo. "Impossible!"

"Oh, well, we'll see," observed Casanova affably. "Here, Teresina, take this, a gold piece for yourself." When Olivo demurred, Casanova added: "Put it in your moneybox, Teresina. That letter is worth any amount of gold pieces!"

Teresina tripped away, and Casanova nodded to himself contentedly. In days gone by he had possessed the girl's mother and grandmother also, and he thought it a particularly good joke that he was paying the little wench for her favors under the very eyes of her father.

CHAPTER SEVEN.



WHEN CASANOVA ENTERED the hall with Olivo, cards had already begun. He acknowledged with serene dignity the effusive greeting of the company, and took his place opposite the Marchese, who was banker. The windows into the garden were open. Casanova heard voices outside; Marcolina and Amalia strolled by, glanced into the room for a moment, and then disappeared.

While the Marchese was dealing, Lorenzi turned to Casanova with ceremonious politeness, saying: "My compliments, Chevalier. You were better informed than I. My regiment is under orders to march tomorrow afternoon."

The Marchese looked surprised. "Why did you not tell us sooner, Lorenzi?"

"The matter did not seem of such supreme importance."

"It is of no great importance to me," said the Marchese. "But don't you think it is of considerable importance to my wife?" He laughed raucously. "As a matter of fact, I have some interest in the matter myself. You won four hundred ducats from me yesterday, and there is not much time left in which to win them back."

"The Lieutenant won money from us too," said the younger Ricardi. The elder, silent as usual, looked over his shoulder at his brother, who stood behind the elder's chair as on the previous day.

"Luck and women....." began the Abbate.

The Marchese finished the sentence for him: "....cannot be constrained."

Lorenzi carelessly scattered his gold on the table. "There you are. I will stake it all upon a single card, if you like, Marchese, so that you need not wait for your money."

Casanova suddenly became aware of a feeling of compassion for Lorenzi, a feeling he was puzzled to account for. But he believed himself to be endowed with second-sight, and he had a premonition that the Lieutenant would fall in his first encounter.

The Marchese did not accept the suggestion of high stakes, nor did Lorenzi insist. They resumed the game, therefore, much as on the previous night, everyone taking a hand at first, and only moderate sums being ventured. A quarter of an hour later, however, the stakes began to rise, and ere long Lorenzi had lost his four hundred ducats to the Marchese.

Casanova had no constancy either in luck or ill-luck. He won, lost, and won again, in an almost ludicrously regular alternation.

Lorenzi drew a breath of relief when his last gold piece had gone the way of the others. Rising from the table, he said: "I thank you, gentlemen. This," he hesitated for a moment, "this will prove to have been my last game for a long time in your hospitable house. If you will allow me, Signor Olivo, I will take leave of the ladies before riding into town. I must reach Mantua ere nightfall in order to make preparations for to-morrow."

"Shameless liar," thought Casanova. "You will return here to-night, to Marcolina's arms!" Rage flamed up in him anew.

"What!" exclaimed the Marchese maliciously. "The evening will not come for hours. Is the game to stop so early? If you like, Lorenzi, my coachman shall drive home with a message to the Marchesa to let her know that you will be late."

"I am going to ride to Mantua," rejoined Lorenzi impatiently. The Marchese, ignoring this statement, went

on: “There is still plenty of time. Put up some of your own money, if it be but a single gold piece.” He dealt Lorenzi a card.

“I have not a single gold piece left,” said Lorenzi wearily.

“Really?”

“Not one,” asserted Lorenzi, as if tired of the whole matter.

“Never mind,” said the Marchese, with a sudden assumption of amiability which was far from congenial. “I will trust you as far as ten ducats goes, or even for a larger sum if needs must.”

“All right, a ducat, then,” said Lorenzi, taking up the card dealt to him.

The Marchese won. Lorenzi went on with the game, as if this were now a matter of course, and was soon in the Marchese’s debt to the amount of one hundred ducats.

At this stage Casanova became banker, and had even better luck than the Marchese. There remained only three players. To-day the brothers Ricardi stood aside without complaint. Olivo and the Abbate were merely interested onlookers.

No one uttered a syllable. Only the cards spoke, and they spoke in unmistakable terms. By the hazard of fortune all the cash found its way to Casanova. In an hour he had won two thousand ducats; he had won them from Lorenzi, though they came out of the pockets of the Marchese, who at length sat there without a soldo.

Casanova offered him whatever gold pieces he might need. The Marchese shook his head. “Thanks,” he said, “I have had enough. The game is over as far as I am concerned.”

From the garden came the laughing voices of the girls. Casanova heard Teresina’s voice in particular, but he was sitting with his back to the window and did not turn round. He tried once more to persuade the Marchese to resume the game — for the sake of Lorenzi, though he hardly knew what moved him. The Marchese refused with a yet more decisive headshake.

Lorenzi rose, saying: “I shall have the honor, Signor Marchese, of handing the amount I owe you to you personally, before noon to-morrow.”

The Marchese laughed drily. “I am curious to know how you will manage that, Lieutenant Lorenzi. There is not a soul, in Mantua or elsewhere, who would lend you as much as ten ducats, not to speak of two thousand, especially to-day. For to-morrow you will be on the march, and who can tell whether you will ever return?”

“I give you my word of honor, Signor Marchese, that you shall have the money at eight o’clock to-morrow morning.”

“Your word of honor,” said the Marchese, “is not worth a single ducat to me, let alone two thousand.”

The others held their breath. Lorenzi, apparently unmoved, merely answered: “You will give me satisfaction, Signor Marchese.”

“With pleasure, Signor Lieutenant,” rejoined the Marchese, “as soon as you have paid your debt.”

Olivo, who was profoundly distressed, here intervened, stammering slightly: “I stand surety for the amount, Signor Marchese. Unfortunately I have not sufficient ready money on the spot; but there is the house, the estate.....” He closed the sentence with an awkward wave of the hand.

“I refuse to accept your surety, for your own sake,” said the Marchese. “You would lose your money.”

Casanova saw that all eyes were turned towards the gold that lay on the table before him. “What if I were to stand surety for Lorenzi,” he thought. “What if I were to pay the debt for him? The Marchese could not refuse my offer. I almost think I ought to do it. It was the Marchese’s money.”

But he said not a word. He felt that a plan was taking shape hi his mind, and that above all he needed time in which he might become clear as to its details.

“You shall have the money this evening, before nightfall,” said Lorenzi. “I shall be in Mantua in an hour.”

“Your horse may break its neck,” replied the Marchese. “You too; intentionally, perhaps.”

“Anyhow,” said the Abbate indignantly, “the Lieutenant cannot get the money here by magic.”

The two Ricardis laughed; but instantly restrained their mirth.

Olivo once more addressed the Marchese. “It is plain that you must grant Lieutenant Lorenzi leave to depart.”

“Yes, if he gives me a pledge,” exclaimed the Marchese with flashing eyes, as if this idea gave him peculiar delight.

“That seems rather a good plan,” said Casanova, a little absent-mindedly, for his scheme was ripening.

Lorenzi drew a ring from his finger and flicked it across the table.

The Marchese took it up, saying: “That is good for a thousand.”

“What about this one?” Lorenzi threw down another ring in front of the Marchese.

The latter nodded, saying: “That is good for the same amount.”

“Are you satisfied now, Signor Marchese?” enquired Lorenzi, moving as if to go.

“I am satisfied,” answered the Marchese, with an evil chuckle; “all the more, seeing that the rings are stolen.”

Lorenzi turned sharply, clenching his fist as if about to strike the Marchese. Olivo and the Abbate seized Lorenzi’s arm.

“I know both the stones, though they have been reset,” said the Marchese without moving from his place. “Look, gentlemen, the emerald is slightly flawed, or it would be worth ten times the amount. The ruby is flawless, but it is not a large one. Both the stones come from a set of jewels which I once gave my wife. And, since it is quite impossible for me to suppose that the Marchesa had them reset in rings for Lieutenant Lorenzi, it is obvious that they have been stolen — that the whole set has been stolen. Well, well, the pledge suffices, Signor Lieutenant, for the nonce.”

“Lorenzi!” cried Olivo, “we all give you our word that no one shall ever hear a syllable from us about what has just happened.”

“And whatever Signor Lorenzi may have done,” said Casanova, “you, Signor Marchese, are the greater rascal of the two.”

“I hope so,” replied the Marchese. “When anyone is as old as we are, Chevalier de Seingalt, assuredly he should not need lessons in rascality. Good-evening, gentlemen.”

He rose to his feet. No one responded to his farewell, and he went out.

For a space the silence was so intense, that once again the girls’ laughter was heard from the garden, now seeming unduly loud.

Who would have ventured to utter the word that was searing Lorenzi’s soul, as he stood at the table with his arm still raised? Casanova, the only one of the company who had remained seated, derived an involuntary artistic pleasure from the contemplation of this fine, threatening gesture, meaningless now, but seemingly petrified, as if the young man had been transformed into a statue.

At length Olivo turned to him with a soothing air; the Ricardis, too, drew near; and the Abbate appeared to be working himself up for a speech. But a sort of shiver passed over Lorenzi’s frame. Automatically but insistently he silently indicated his rejection of any offers at intervention. Then, with a polite inclination of the head, he quietly left the room.

Casanova, who had meanwhile wrapped up the money in a silken kerchief, instantly followed. Without looking at the others’ faces, he could feel that they were convinced it was his instant intention to do what they

had all the while been expecting, namely, to place his winnings at Lorenzi’s disposal.

CHAPTER EIGHT.



CASANOVA OVERTOOK LORENZI in the chestnut avenue. Speaking lightly, he said: "May I have the pleasure of accompanying you on your walk, Lieutenant Lorenzi?"

Lorenzi, without looking at him, answered in an arrogant tone which seemed hardly in keeping with his situation: "As you please, Chevalier; but I am afraid you will not find me an amusing companion."

"Perhaps, Lieutenant, you will on the other hand find me an entertaining companion. If you have no objection, let us take the path through the vineyard, where our conversation will be undisturbed."

They turned aside from the high-road into the narrow footway running beside the garden wall, along which Casanova had walked with Olivo on the previous day.

"You are right in supposing," began Casanova, "that I have it in mind to offer you the sum of money which you owe to the Marchese. Not as a loan. That, if you will excuse my saying so, seems to me rather too risky a venture. I could let you have it as a slight return for a service which I think you may be able to do me."

"Go on," said Lorenzi coldly.

"Before I say any more," answered Casanova, in a similar tone, "I must make a condition upon your acceptance of which the continuance of this conversation depends."

"Name your condition."

"Give me your word of honor that you will listen to me without interruption, even though what I have to say may arouse your displeasure or your wrath. When you have heard me to the end, it will rest entirely with yourself whether you accept a proposal which, I am well aware, is of an extremely unusual nature. But I want you to answer it with a simple Yes or No. Whatever the issue, no one is to hear a word concerning what passes at this interview between two men of honor, who are perhaps no better than they should be."

"I am ready to listen to your proposal."

"You accept my condition?"

"I will not interrupt you."

"And you will answer nothing beyond Yes or No?"

"Nothing beyond Yes or No."

"Very well," said Casanova. They walked slowly up the hill, between the vine stocks, in the sultry heat of the late afternoon. Casanova began to speak: "We shall perhaps understand one another best if we discuss the matter logically. It is obvious that you have absolutely no chance of obtaining the money you owe the Marchese within the prescribed time. There can be no doubt that he has made up his mind to ruin you should you fail to pay. Since he knows more of you than he actually disclosed to us to-day" — Casanova was venturing beyond the limits of his own knowledge, but he loved to take these little risks when following up a path decided on in advance— "you are absolutely in the power of the old ruffian, and your fate as an officer and a gentleman would be sealed. There you have one side of the question. On the other hand, you will be saved as soon as you have paid your debt, and as soon as you get back those rings — however you may have come by them. This will mean the recovery of an existence which is otherwise practically closed. Since you are young, handsome, and bold, it will mean the recovery of an existence which offers splendor, happiness, and renown. This appears to me a most attractive prospect; especially seeing that the only alternative is an inglorious, nay, a shameful ruin; for such a prospect, I should be willing to sacrifice a prejudice which I had never really possessed. I am well aware, Lorenzi," he added quickly, as if expecting contradiction and

desiring to forestall it, “I am well aware, that you have no more prejudices than I have or ever had. What I am going to ask of you is merely what I should in your place under like circumstances be willing to do, without a moment’s hesitation. Indeed, I have never hesitated, at the call of destiny or as the outcome of caprice, to commit a rascality, or rather, that to which fools give such a name. Like you, Lorenzi, I have ever been ready to hazard my life for less than nothing, and to call it quits. I am ready to do so now, if my proposal prove inacceptable. We are made of the same stuff, you and I; we are brothers in spirit; we may therefore disclose our souls to one another without false shame, proud in our nakedness. Here are my two thousand ducats. Call them yours, if you enable me to spend to-night in your place with Marcolina. — Let us not stand still, if you please, Lorenzi. Let us continue our walk.” They walked through the fields, beneath the fruit trees, between which the vines, heavy with grape-clusters, were trellised. Casanova went on without a pause: “Don’t answer me yet, Lorenzi, for I have not finished. My request would naturally be, if not monstrous, at least preposterous, if it were your intention to make Marcolina your wife, or if Marcolina’s own hopes or wishes turned in this direction. But just as last night was your first night spent in love together” — he uttered this guess as if he had absolute knowledge of the fact— “so also was the ensuing night predestined, according to all human calculation, according to your own expectations and Marcolina’s, to be your last night together for a long period and probably for ever. I am absolutely convinced that Marcolina herself, in order to save her lover from certain destruction, and simply upon his wish, would be perfectly willing to give this one night to his savior. For she, too, is a philosopher, and is therefore just as free from prejudices as we are. Nevertheless, certain as I am that she would meet the test, I am far from intending that it should be imposed upon her. To possess a woman outwardly passive but inwardly resistant, would be far from satisfying my desires, least of all in the present case. I wish, not merely as a lover, but also as one beloved, to taste a rapture which I should be prepared to pay for with my life. Understand this clearly, Lorenzi. For the reason I have explained, Marcolina must not for an instant suspect that I am the man whom she is clasping to her sweet bosom; she must be firmly convinced that you are in her arms. It is your part to pave the way for this deception; mine to maintain it. You will not have much difficulty in making her understand that you will have to leave her before dawn. Nor need you be at a loss for a pretext as to the necessity for perfectly mute caresses when you return at night, as you will promise to return. To avert all danger of discovery at the last moment, I shall, when the time comes for me to leave, act as if I heard a suspicious noise outside the window. Seizing my cloak, — or rather yours, which you must of course lend me for the occasion — I shall vanish through the window, never to return. For, of course, I shall take my leave this evening. But half-way back to Mantua, telling the coachman that I have forgotten some important papers, I shall return here on foot. Entering the garden by the side door (you must give me the master-key), I shall creep to Marcolina’s window, which must be opened for me at midnight. I shall have taken off my clothes in the carriage, even to my shoes and stockings, and shall wear only your cloak, so that when I take to flight nothing will be left to betray either you or me. The cloak and the two thousand ducats will be at your disposal at five o’clock to-morrow morning in the inn at Mantua, so that you may deliver over the money to the Marchese even before the appointed hour. I pledge my solemn oath to fulfil my side of the bargain. I have finished.”

Suddenly he stood still. The sun was near to setting. A gentle breeze made the yellow ears rustle; the tower of Olivo’s house glowed red in the evening light. Lorenzi, too, halted. His pale face was motionless, as he gazed into vacancy over Casanova’s shoulder. His arms hung limp by his sides, whereas Casanova’s hand, ready for any emergency, rested as if by chance upon the hilt of his sword. A few seconds elapsed, and Lorenzi was still silent. He seemed immersed in tranquil thought, but Casanova remained on the alert, holding the kerchief with the ducats in his left hand, but keeping the right upon his sword-hilt. He spoke once more.

“You have honorably fulfilled my conditions. I know that it has not been easy. For even though we may be free from prejudices, the atmosphere in which we live is so full of them that we cannot wholly escape their influence. And just as you, Lorenzi, during the last quarter of an hour, have more than once been on the point of seizing me by the throat; so I, I must confess, played for a time with the idea of giving you the two thousand ducats as to my friend. Rarely, Lorenzi, have I been so strangely drawn to anyone as I was to you from the first. But had I yielded to this generous impulse, the next moment I should have regretted it bitterly. In like manner you, Lorenzi, hi the moment before you blow your brains out, would desperately regret having been such a fool as to throw away a thousand nights of love with new and ever new women for one single night of love which neither night nor day was to follow.”

Lorenzi remained mute. His silence continued for many minutes, until Casanova began to ask himself how long his patience was to be tried. He was on the point of departing with a curt salutation, and of thus indicating that he understood his proposition to have been rejected, when Lorenzi, without a word slowly moved his right hand backwards into the tail-pocket of his coat. Casanova, ever on his guard, instantly stepped back a pace, and was ready to duck. Lorenzi handed him the key of the garden door.

Casanova’s movement, which had certainly betokened fear, brought to Lorenzi’s lips the flicker of a contemptuous smile. Casanova was able to repress all sign of his rising anger, for he knew that had he given way to it he might have ruined his design. Taking the key with a nod, he merely said: “No doubt that means Yes. In an hour from now — an hour will suffice for your understanding with Marcolina — I shall expect you in the turret chamber. There, in exchange for your cloak, I shall have the pleasure of handing you the two thousand gold pieces without further delay. First of all, as a token of confidence; and secondly because I really do not know what I should do with the money during the night.”

They parted without further formality. Lorenzi returned to the house by the path along which they had both come. Casanova made his way to the village by a different route. At the inn there, by paying a considerable sum as earnest money, he was able to arrange for a carriage to await him at ten o’clock that evening for the drive from Olivo’s house into Mantua.

CHAPTER NINE.



RETURNING TO THE house, Casanova disposed of his gold in a safe corner of the turret chamber. Thence he descended to the garden, where a spectacle awaited him, not in itself remarkable, but one which touched him strangely in his present mood. Upon a bench at the edge of the greensward Olivo was sitting beside Amalia, his arm round her waist. Reclining at their feet were the three girls, tired out by the afternoon's play. Maria, the youngest, had her head in her mother's lap, and seemed to be asleep; Nanetta lay at full length on the grass with her head pillowed on her arm; Teresina was leaning against her father's knee, and he was stroking her hair. As Casanova drew near, Teresina greeted him, not with the look of lascivious understanding which he had involuntarily expected, but with a frank smile of childlike confidence, as if what had passed between them only a few hours before had been nothing more than some trivial pastime. Olivo's face lighted up in friendly fashion, and Amalia nodded a cordial greeting. It was plain to Casanova that they were receiving him as one who had just performed a generous deed, but who would prefer, from a sense of refinement, that no allusion should be made to the matter.

"Are you really determined to leave us tomorrow, Chevalier?" enquired Olivo.

"Not to-morrow," answered Casanova, "but, as I told you, this very evening."

Olivo would fain have renewed his protests, but Casanova shrugged, saying in a tone of regret: "Unfortunately, my letter from Venice leaves me no option. The summons sent to me is so honorable in every respect that to delay my return home would be an unpardonable affront to my distinguished patrons." He asked his host and hostess to excuse him for a brief space. He would go to his room, make all ready for departure, and would then be able to enjoy the last hours of his stay undisturbed in his dear friends' company.

Disregarding further entreaties, he went to the turret chamber, and first of all changed his attire, since the simpler suit must suffice for the journey. He then packed his valise, and listened for Lorenzi's footsteps with an interest which grew keener from moment to moment. Before the time was up, Lorenzi, knocking once at the door, entered, wearing a dark blue riding-cloak. Without a word, he slipped the cloak from his shoulders and let it fall to the floor, where it lay between the two men, a shapeless mass of cloth. Casanova withdrew his kerchief filled with the gold pieces from beneath the bolster, and emptied the money on the table. He counted the coins under Lorenzi's eyes — a process which was soon over, for many of the gold pieces were worth several ducats each. Putting the stipulated sum into two purses, he handed these to Lorenzi. This left about a hundred ducats for himself. Lorenzi stuffed the purses into his tail-pockets, and was about to leave, still silent.

"Wait a moment, Lorenzi," said Casanova. "Our paths in life may cross once again. If so let us meet as friends. We have made a bargain like many another bargain; let us cry quits."

Casanova held out his hand. Lorenzi would not take it. He spoke for the first time. "I cannot recall that anything was said about this in our agreement." Turning on his heel he left the room. "Do we stand so strictly upon the letter, my friend?" thought Casanova. "It behooves me all the more to see to it that I am not duped in the end." In truth, he had given no serious thought to this possibility. He knew from personal experience that such men as Lorenzi have their own peculiar code of honor, a code which cannot be written in formal propositions, but which they can be relied upon to observe.

He packed Lorenzi's cloak in the top of the valise. Having stowed away upon his person the remaining gold pieces, he took a final glance round the room which he was never likely to revisit. Then with sword and hat, ready for the journey, he made his way to the hall, where he found Olivo, Amalia, and the children

already seated at table. At the same instant, Marcolina entered by the garden door. The coincidence was interpreted by Casanova as a propitious sign. She answered his salutation with a frank inclination of the head.

Supper was now served. The conversation dragged a little at first, as if all were oppressed by the thought of the imminent leave-taking. Amalia seemed busied with her girls, concerned to see that they were not helped to too much or too little. Olivo, somewhat irrelevantly, began to speak of a trifling lawsuit he had just won against a neighboring landowner. Next he referred to a business journey to Mantua and Cremona, which he would shortly have to undertake. Casanova expressed the hope that ere long he would be able to entertain his friend in Venice, a city which, by a strange chance, Olivo had never visited. Amalia had seen the place of wonder as a child. She could not recall the journey thither, but could only remember having seen an old man wrapped in a scarlet cloak, disembarking from a long black boat. He had stumbled and had fallen prone.

"Have you never been to Venice either?" asked Casanova of Marcolina, who was seated facing him, so that she could see over his shoulder into the deep gloom of the garden. She shook her head. Casanova mused: "If I could but show you the city in which I passed my youth! Had you but been young with me!" Another thought, as foolish as both of these, crossed his mind: "Even now, if I could but take you there with me."

While thus thinking, at the same time, with the ease of manner peculiar to him in moments of great excitement, he began to speak of his native city. At first his language was cool; he used an artist's touch, as if painting a picture. Warming up by degrees, he entered into details of personal history, so that of a sudden his own figure appeared in the centre of the canvas, filling it with life. He spoke of his mother, the celebrated actress, for whom her admirer Goldoni had written his admirable comedy, *La Pupilla*. Next he recounted the unhappy days spent in Dr. Gozzi's boarding school. Then he spoke of his childish passion for the gardener's little daughter, who had subsequently run away with a lackey; of his first sermon as a young abbate, after which he found in the offertory bag, in addition to the usual collection, a number of love letters; of his doings as a fiddler in the orchestra of the San Samueli Theatre; of the pranks which he and his companions had played in the alleys, taverns, dancing halls, and gaming-houses of Venice — sometimes masked and sometimes unmasked. In telling the story of these riotous escapades, he was careful to avoid the use of any offensive epithet. He phrased his narrative in choice imaginative language, as if paying due regard to the presence of the young girls, who, like their elders, including Marcolina, listened with rapt attention. The hour grew late, and Amalia sent her daughters to bed. They all kissed Casanova a tender good-night, Teresina behaving exactly like her sisters. He made them promise that they would soon come with their father and mother to visit him in Venice. When they had gone, he spoke with less restraint, but continued to avoid any unsuitable innuendo or display of vanity. His audience might have imagined themselves listening to the story of a Parsifal rather than to that of a Casanova, the dangerous seducer and half-savage adventurer.

He told them of the fair Unknown who had travelled with him for weeks disguised as a man in officer's uniform, and one morning had suddenly disappeared from his side; of the daughter of the gentleman cobbler in Madrid who, in the intervals between their embraces, had studiously endeavored to make a good Catholic of him; of Lia, the lovely Jewess of Turin, who had a better seat on horseback than any princess; of Manon Balletti, sweet and innocent, the only woman he had almost married; of the singer whom he had hissed in Warsaw because of her bad performance, whereupon he had had to fight a duel with her lover, General Branitzky, and had been compelled to flee the city; of the wicked woman Charpillon, who had made such an abject fool of him in London; of the night when he crossed the lagoons to Murano on the way to his adored nun, the night when he nearly lost his life in a storm; of Croce the gamester, who, after losing a fortune at Spa, had taken a tearful farewell of Casanova upon the high-road, and had set off on his way to St. Petersburg, just as he was, wearing silk stockings and a coat of apple-green satin, and carrying nothing but a walking

cane.

He told of actresses, singers, dressmakers, countesses, dancers, chambermaids; of gamblers, officers, princes, envoys, financiers, musicians, and adventurers. So carried away was he by the rediscovered charm of his own past, so completely did the triumph of these splendid though irrecoverable experiences eclipse the consciousness of the shadows that encompassed his present, that he was on the point of telling the story of a pale but pretty girl who in a twilit church at Mantua had confided her love troubles to him — absolutely forgetting that this same girl, sixteen years older, now sat at the table before him as the wife of his friend Olivo — when the maid came in to say that the carriage was waiting. Instantly, with his incomparable talent for doing the right thing, Casanova rose to bid adieu. He again pressed Olivo, who was too much affected to speak, to bring wife and children to visit him in Venice. Having embraced his friend, he approached Amalia with intent to embrace her also, but she held out her hand and he kissed it affectionately.

When he turned to Marcolina, she said: "You ought to write down everything you told us this evening, Chevalier, and a great deal more, just as you have penned the story of your flight from The Leads."

"Do you really mean that, Marcolina?" he enquired, with the shyness of a young author.

She smiled with gentle mockery, saying: "I fancy such a book might prove far more entertaining than your polemic against Voltaire."

"Very likely," he thought. "Perhaps I may follow your advice some day. If so, you, Marcolina, shall be the theme of the last chapter."

This notion, and still more the thought that the last chapter was to be lived through that very night, made his face light up so strangely that Marcolina, who had given him her hand in farewell, drew it away again before he could stoop to kiss it. Without betraying either disappointment or anger, Casanova turned to depart, after signifying, with one of those simple gestures of which he was a master, his desire that no one, not even Olivo, should follow him.

He strode rapidly through the chestnut avenue, handed a gold piece to the maid who had brought his valise to the carriage, took his seat and drove away.

The sky was overcast. In the village, lamps were still burning in some of the cottages; but by the time the carriage regained the open road, the only light piercing the darkness was supplied by the yellow rays of the lantern dangling from the shaft. Casanova opened the valise, took out Lorenzi's cloak, flung it over his shoulders, and under this cover rapidly undressed. He packed the discarded clothing, together with shoes and stockings, in the valise, and wrapped himself in the cloak. Then he called to the coachman:

"Stop, we must drive back!"

The coachman turned heavily hi his seat.

"I have left some of my papers in the house. Don't you understand? We must drive back."

When the coachman, a surly, thin greybeard, still hesitated, Casanova said: "Of course I will pay you extra for your trouble. Here you are!" He pressed a gold piece into the man's hand.

The coachman nodded, muttered something, gave his horse a needless cut with the whip, and turned the carriage round. When they drove back through the village, all the houses were dark. A little farther on, the coachman was about to turn into the by-road leading up the gentle ascent to Olivo's house.

"Halt!" cried Casanova. "We won't drive any nearer, lest we should wake them all up. Wait for me here at the corner. I shall be back in a minute or two. If I should happen to keep you longer, you shall have a ducat for every hour!"

The man by his nod seemed to show he understood what was afoot.

Casanova descended and made quickly past the closed door and along the wall to the corner. Here began

the path leading through the vineyards. It still led along the wall. Having walked it twice by daylight, Casanova had no difficulty in the dark. Half way up the hill came a second angle in the wall. Here he had again to turn to the right, across soft meadow-land, and in the pitchy night had to feel along the wall until he found the garden door. At length his fingers recognized the change from smooth stone to rough wood, and he could easily make out the framework of the narrow door. He unlocked it, entered the garden, and made all fast again behind him.

Across the greensward he could now discern house and tower. They seemed incredibly far off and yet incredibly large. He stood where he was for a while, looking around. What to other eyes would have been impenetrable darkness, was to him no more than deep twilight. The gravel path being painful to his bare feet, he walked upon the greensward, where, moreover, his footfall made no sound. So light was his tread that he felt as if soaring.

"Has my mood changed," he thought, "since those days when, as a man of thirty, I sought such adventures? Do I not now, as then, feel all the ardors of desire and all the sap of youth course through my veins? Am I not, as of old, Casanova? Being Casanova, why should I be subject, as others are subject, to the pitiful law which is called age!"

Growing bolder, he asked himself: "Why am I creeping in disguise to Marcolina? Is not Casanova a better man than Lorenzi, even though he be thirty years older? Is not she the one woman who would have understood the incomprehensible? Was it needful to commit this lesser rascality, and to mislead another man into the commission of a greater rascality? Should I not, with a little patience, have reached the same goal? Lorenzi would in any case have gone to-morrow, whilst I should have remained. Five days, three days, and she would have given herself to me, knowing me to be Casanova."

He stood close to the wall of the house beneath Marcolina's window, which was still closed. His thoughts ran on: "Is it too late? I could come back to-morrow or the next day. Could begin the work of seduction — in honorable fashion, so to speak. To-night would be but a foretaste of the future. Marcolina must not learn that I have been here to-day — or not until much later."

CHAPTER TEN.



MARCOLINA'S WINDOW WAS still closed. There was no sign from within. It wanted a few minutes to midnight. Should he make his presence known in any way? By tapping gently at the window? Since nothing of this sort had been arranged, it might arouse Marcolina's suspicions. Better wait. It could not be much longer. The thought that she might instantly recognize him, might detect the fraud before he had achieved his purpose, crossed his mind — not for the first time, yet as a passing fancy, as a remote possibility which it was logical to take into account, but not anything to be seriously dreaded.

A ludicrous adventure now recurred to his mind. Twenty years ago he had spent a night with a middle-aged ugly vixen in Soleure, when he had imagined himself to be possessing a beautiful young woman whom he adored. He recalled how next day, in a shameless letter, she had derided him for the mistake that she had so greatly desired him to make and that she had compassed with such infamous cunning. He shuddered at the thought. It was the last thing he would have wished to think of just now, and he drove the detestable image from his mind.

It must be midnight! How long was he to stand shivering there? Waiting in vain, perhaps? Cheated, after all? Two thousand ducats for nothing. Lorenzi behind the curtain, mocking at the fool outside!

Involuntarily he gripped the hilt of the sword he carried beneath the cloak, pressed to his naked body. After all, with a fellow like Lorenzi one must be prepared for any tricks.

At that instant he heard a gentle rattling, and knew it was made by the grating of Marcolina's window hi opening. Then both wings of the window were drawn back, though the curtain still veiled the interior. Casanova remained motionless for a few seconds more, until the curtain was pulled aside by an unseen hand. Taking this as a sign, he swung himself over the sill into the room, and promptly closed window and grating behind him. The curtain had fallen across his shoulders, so that he had to push his way beneath it. Now he would have been in absolute darkness had there not been shining from the depths of the distance, incredibly far away, as if awakened by his own gaze, the faintest possible illumination to show him the way. No more than three paces forward, and eager arms enfolded him. Letting the sword slip from his hand, the cloak from his shoulders, he gave himself up to his bliss.

From Marcolina's sigh of surrender, from the tears of happiness which he kissed from her cheeks, from the ever-renewed warmth with which she received his caresses, he felt sure that she shared his rapture; and to him this rapture seemed more intense than he had ever experienced, seemed to possess a new and strange quality. Pleasure became worship; passion was transfused with an intense consciousness. Here at last was the reality which he had often falsely imagined himself to be on the point of attaining, and which had always eluded his grasp. He held in his arms a woman upon whom he could squander himself, with whom he could feel himself inexhaustible; the woman upon whose breast the moment of ultimate self-abandonment and of renewed desire seemed to coalesce into a single instant of hitherto unimagined spiritual ecstasy. Were not life and death, time and eternity, one upon these lips? Was he not a god? Were not youth and age merely a fable; visions of men's fancy? Were not home and exile, splendor and misery, renown and oblivion, senseless distinctions, fit only for the use of the uneasy, the lonely, the frustrate; had not the words become unmeaning to one who was Casanova, and who had found Marcolina?

More contemptible, more absurd, as the minutes passed, seemed to him the prospect of keeping the resolution which he had made when still pusillanimous, of acting on the determination to flee out of this night

of miracle dumbly, unrecognized, like a thief. With the infallible conviction that he must be the bringer of delight even as he was the receiver of delight, he felt prepared for the venture of disclosing his name, even though he knew all the time that he would thus play for a great stake, the loss of which would involve the loss of his very existence. He was still shrouded in impenetrable darkness, and until the first glimmer of dawn made its way through the thick curtain, he could postpone a confession upon whose favorable acceptance by Marcolina his fate, nay his life, depended.

Besides, was not this mute, passionately sweet association the very thing to bind Marcolina to him more firmly with each kiss that they enjoyed? Would not the ineffable bliss of this night transmute into truth what had been conceived in falsehood? His duped mistress, woman of women, had she not already an inkling that it was not Lorenzi, the stripling, but Casanova, the man, with whom she was mingling in these divine ardors?

He began to deem it possible that he might be spared the so greatly desired and ‘yet so intensely dreaded moment of revelation. He fancied that Marcolina, thrilling, entranced, transfigured, would spontaneously whisper his name. Then, when she had forgiven him, he would take her with him that very hour. Together they would leave the house in the grey dawn; together they would seek the carriage that was waiting at the turn of the road; together they would drive away. She would be his for evermore. This would be the crown of his life; that at an age when others were doomed to a sad senility, he, by the overwhelming might of his unconquerable personality, would have won for himself the youngest, the most beautiful, the most gifted of women.

For this woman was his as no woman had ever been before. He glided with her through mysterious, narrow canals, between palaces in whose shadows he was once more at home, under high-arched bridges which blurred figures were swiftly crossing. Many of the wayfarers glanced down for a moment over the parapet, and vanished ere their faces could be discerned.

Now the gondola drew alongside. A marble stairway led up to the stately mansion of Senator Bragadino. It was the only palace holding festival. Masked guests were ascending and descending. Many of them paused with inquisitive glances; but who could recognize Casanova and Marcolina in their dominoes?

He entered the hall with her. Here was a great company playing for high stakes. All the senators, Bragadino among them, were seated round the table in their purple robes. As Casanova came through the door, they whispered his name as if terror-stricken, for the flashing of his eyes behind the mask had disclosed his identity. He did not sit down; he did not take any cards, and yet he joined in the game. He won. He won all the gold on the table, and this did not suffice. The senators had to give him notes of hand. They lost their possessions, their palaces, their purple robes; they were beggars; they crawled round him clad in rags, kissing his hands.

Nearby, in a hall with crimson hangings, there was music and dancing. Casanova wished to dance with Marcolina, but she had vanished. Once again the senators in their purple robes were seated at the table; but now Casanova knew that the hazards at stake were not those of a game of cards; he knew that the destinies of accused persons, some criminal and some innocent, hung in the balance.

What had become of Marcolina? Had he not been holding her by the hand all the time? He rushed down the staircase. The gondola was waiting. On, on, through the maze of canals. Of course the gondolier knew where Marcolina was; but why was he, too, masked? That had not been the custom of old in Venice. Casanova wished to question him, but was afraid. Does a man become so cowardly when he grows old?

Onward, ever onward. How huge Venice had grown during these five-and-twenty years! At length the houses came to an end; the canal opened out; they were passing between islands; there stood the walls of the Murano nunnery, to which Marcolina had fled.

There was no gondola now; he had to swim; how delightful! It was true that in Venice the children were playing with his gold pieces. But what was money to him? The water was now warm, now cold; it dripped from his clothing as he climbed over the wall.

"Where is Marcolina?" he enquired in the parlor, in loud, challenging tones such as only a prince would dare to use.

"I will summon her," said the Lady Abbess, and sank into the ground.

Casanova wandered about; he had wings; he fluttered to and fro along the gratings, fluttered like a bat. "If I had only known sooner that I can fly," he thought. "I will teach Marcolina."

Behind the gratings, the figures of women were moving hither and thither. They were nuns — and yet they were all wearing secular dress. He knew it, though he could not really see them. He knew who they were. Henriette the Unknown; Corticelli and Cristina, the dancers; the bride; Dubois the Beautiful; the accurst vixen of Soleure; Manon Balletti; a hundred others — but never Marcolina!

"You have betrayed me," he cried to the gondolier, who was waiting for him beneath. Never had he hated anyone as he hated this gondolier, and he swore to take an exquisite revenge.

But how foolish he had been to seek Marcolina in the Murano nunnery when she had gone to visit Voltaire. It was fortunate that he could fly, since he had no money left with which to pay for a carriage.

He swam away. But he was no longer enjoying himself. The water grew colder and colder; he was drifting out into the open sea, far from Murano, far from Venice, and there was no ship within sight; his heavy gold-embroidered garments were dragging him down; he tried to strip them off, but it was impossible, for he was holding his manuscript, the manuscript he had to give to M. Voltaire. The water was pouring into his mouth and nose; deadly fear seized him; he clutched at impalpable things; there was a rattling in his throat; he screamed; and with a great effort he opened his eyes.

Between the curtain and the window-frame the dawn was making its way through in a narrow strip of light. Marcolina, in her white nightdress and with hands crossed upon her bosom, was standing at the foot of the bed contemplating Casanova with unutterable horror. Her glance instantly recalled him to his senses. Involuntarily he stretched out his arms towards her with a gesture of appeal. Marcolina, as if rejecting this appeal, waved him away with her left hand, while with the right she continued to grasp her raiment convulsively. Casanova sat up, his eyes riveted upon her. Neither was able to look away from the other. His expression was one of rage and shame; hers was one of shame and disgust. Casanova knew how she saw him, for he saw himself figured in imagination, just as he had seen himself yesterday in the bedroom mirror. A yellow, evil face, deeply lined, with thin lips and staring eyes — a face three times worse than that of yesterday, because of the excesses of the night, the ghastly dream of the morning, and the terrible awakening. And what he read in Marcolina's countenance was not what he would a thousand times rather have read there; it was not thief, libertine, villain. He read only something which crushed him to earth more ignominiously than could any terms of abuse; he read the word which to him was the most dreadful of all words, since it passed a final judgment upon him — old man.

Had it been within his power to annihilate himself by a spell, he would have done so, that he might be spared from having to creep out of the bed and display himself to Marcolina in his nakedness, which must appear to her more loathsome than the sight of some loathsome beast.

But Marcolina, as if gradually collecting herself, and manifestly in order to give him the opportunity which was indispensable, turned her face to the wall. He seized the moment to get out of bed, to raise the cloak from the floor, and to wrap himself in it. He was quick, too, to make sure of his sword. Now, when he conceived himself to have at least escaped the worst contumely of all, that of ludicrousness, he began to wonder whether

it would not be possible to throw another light upon this affair in which he cut so pitiful a figure. He was an adept in the use of language. Could he not somehow or other, by a few well-chosen words, give matters a favorable turn?

From the nature of the circumstances, it was evidently impossible for Marcolina to doubt that Lorenzi had sold her to Casanova. Yet however intensely she might hate her wretched lover at that moment, Casanova felt that he himself, the cowardly thief, must seem a thousand times more hateful.

Perhaps another course offered better promise of satisfaction. He might degrade Marcolina by mockery and lascivious phrases, full of innuendo. But this spiteful idea could not be sustained in face of the aspect she had now assumed. Her expression of horror had gradually been transformed into one of infinite sadness, as if it had been not Marcolina's womanhood alone which had been desecrated by Casanova, but as if during the night that had just closed a nameless and inexpiable offence had been committed by cunning against trust, by lust against love, by age against youth. Beneath this gaze which, to Casanova's extremest torment, reawakened for a brief space all that was still good in him, he turned away. Without looking round at Marcolina, he went to the window, drew the curtain aside, opened casement and grating, cast a glance round the garden which still seemed to slumber in the twilight, and swung himself across the sill into the open.

Aware of the possibility that someone in the house might already be awake and might spy him from a window, he avoided the greensward and sought cover in the shaded alley. Passing through the door in the wall, he had hardly closed it behind him, when someone blocked his path. "The gondolier!" was his first idea. For now he suddenly realized that the gondolier in his dream had been Lorenzi. The young officer stood before him. His silver-braided scarlet tunic glowed in the morning light.

"What a splendid uniform," was the thought that crossed Casanova's confused, weary brain. "It looks quite new. I am sure it has not been paid for." These trivial reflections helped him to the full recovery of his wits; and as soon as he realized the situation, his mind was filled with gladness. Drawing himself up proudly, and grasping the hilt of his sword firmly beneath the cloak, he said in a tone of the utmost amiability: "Does it not seem to you, Lieutenant Lorenzi, that this notion of yours has come a thought too late?"

"By no means," answered Lorenzi, looking handsomer than any man Casanova had ever seen before. "Only one of us two shall leave the place alive."

"What a hurry you are in, Lorenzi," said Casanova in an almost tender tone. "Cannot the affair rest until we reach Mantua? I shall be delighted to give you a lift in my carriage, which is waiting at the turn of the road. There is a great deal to be said for observing the forms in these matters, especially in such a case as ours."

"No forms are needed. You or I, Casanova, at this very hour." He drew his sword.

Casanova shrugged. "Just as you please, Lorenzi. But you might at least remember that I shall be reluctantly compelled to appear in a very inappropriate costume." He threw open the cloak and stood there nude, playing with the sword in his hand.

Hate welled up in Lorenzi's eyes. "You shall not be at any disadvantage," he said, and began to strip with all possible speed.

Casanova turned away, and for the moment wrapped himself in his cloak once more, for though the sun was already piercing the morning mists, the air was chill. Long shadows lay across the fields, cast by the sparse trees on the hill-top. For an instant Casanova wondered whether someone might not come down the path. Doubtless it was used only by Olivo and the members of his household. It occurred to Casanova that these were perhaps the last minutes of his life, and he was amazed at his own calmness.

"M. Voltaire is a lucky fellow," came as a passing thought. But in truth he had no interest in Voltaire, and

he would have been glad at this supreme moment to have been able to call up pleasanter images than that of the old author's vulturine physiognomy. How strange it was that no birds were piping in the trees over the wall. A change of weather must be imminent. But what did the weather matter to him? He would rather think of Marcolina, of the ecstasy he had enjoyed in her arms, and for which he was now to pay dear. Dear? Cheap enough! A few years of an old man's life hi penury and obscurity. What was there left for him to do in the world? To poison Bragadino? Was it worth the trouble? Nothing was worth the trouble. How few trees there were on the hill! He began to count them. "Five... seven... ten. — Have I nothing better to do?"

"I am ready, Casanova."

Casanova turned smartly. Lorenzi stood before him, splendid in his nakedness like a young god. No trace of meanness lingered in his face. He seemed equally ready to kill or to die.

"What if I were to throw away my sword?" thought Casanova. "What if I were to embrace him?" He slipped the cloak from his shoulders and stood like Lorenzi, lean and naked.

Lorenzi lowered his point in salute, in accordance with the rules of fence. Casanova returned the salute. Next moment they crossed blades, and the steel glittered like silver in the sun.

"How long is it," thought Casanova, "since last I stood thus measuring sword with sword?" But none of his serious duels now recurred to his mind. He could think only of practice with the foils, such as ten years earlier he used to have every morning with his valet Costa, the rascal who afterwards bolted with a hundred and fifty thousand lire. "All the same, he was a fine fencer; nor has my hand forgotten its cunning! My arm is as true, my vision as keen, as ever..... Youth and age are fables. Am I not a god? Are we not both gods? If anyone could see us now. There are women who would pay a high price for the spectacle!"

The blades bent, the points sparkled; at each contact the rapiers sang softly in the morning air. "A fight? No, a fencing match! Why this look of horror, Marcolina? Are we not both worthy of your love? He is but a youngster; I am Casanova!"

Lorenzi sank to the ground, thrust through the heart. The sword fell from his grip. He opened his eyes wide, as if in utter astonishment. Once he raised his head for a moment, while his lips were fixed in a wry smile. Then the head fell back again, his nostrils dilated, there was a slight rattling in his throat, and he was dead.

Casanova bent over him, kneeled beside the body, saw a few drops of blood ooze from the wound, held his hand in front of Lorenzi's mouth — but the breath was stilled. A cold shiver passed through Casanova's frame. He rose and put on his cloak. Then, returning to the body, he glanced at the fallen youth, lying stark on the turf in incomparable beauty. The silence was broken by a soft rustling, as the morning breeze stirred the tree-tops.

"What shall I do?" Casanova asked himself. "Shall I summon aid? Olivo? Amalia? Marcolina? To what purpose? No one can bring him back to life."

He pondered with the calmness invariable to him in the most dangerous moments of his career. "It may be hours before anyone finds him; perhaps no one will come by before evening; perchance later still. That will give me time, and time is of the first importance."

He was still holding his sword. Noticing that it was bloody, he wiped it on the grass. He thought for a moment of dressing the corpse, but to do this would have involved the loss of precious and irrecoverable minutes. Paying the last duties, he bent once more and closed Lorenzi's eyes. "Lucky fellow," he murmured; and then, dreamily, he kissed the dead man's forehead.

He strode along beside the wall, turned the angle, and regained the road. The carriage was where he had left it, the coachman fast asleep on the box. Casanova was careful to avoid waking the man at first. Not until

he had cautiously taken his seat did he call out: “Hullo, drive on, can’t you?” and prodded him in the back. The startled coachman looked round, greatly astonished to find that it was broad daylight. Then he whipped up his horse and drove off.

Casanova sat far back in the carriage, wrapped in the cloak which had once belonged to Lorenzi. In the village a few children were to be seen in the streets, but it was plain that the elders were already at work in the fields. When the houses had been left behind Casanova drew a long breath. Opening the valise, he withdrew his clothes, and dressed beneath the cover of the cloak, somewhat concerned lest the coachman should turn and discover his fare’s strange behavior. But nothing of the sort happened. Unmolested, Casanova was able to finish dressing, to pack away Lorenzi’s cloak, and resume his own.

Glancing skyward, Casanova saw that the heavens were overcast. He had no sense of fatigue, but felt tense and wakeful. He thought over his situation, considering it from every possible point of view, and coming to the conclusion that, though grave, it was less alarming than it might have seemed to timid spirits. He would probably be suspected of having killed Lorenzi, but who could doubt that it had been in an honorable fight? Besides, Lorenzi had been lying in wait, had forced the encounter upon him, and no one could consider him a criminal for having fought in self-defence. But why had he left the body lying on the grass like that of a dead dog? Well, nobody could reproach him on that account. To flee away swiftly had been well within his right, had been almost a duty. In his place, Lorenzi would have done the same. But perhaps Venice would hand him over? Directly he arrived, he would claim the protection of his patron Bragadino. Yet this might involve his accusing himself of a deed which would after all remain undiscovered, or at any rate would perhaps never be laid to his charge. What proof was there against him? Had he not been summoned to Venice? Who could say that he went thither as a fugitive from justice? The coachman maybe, who had waited for him half the night. One or two additional gold pieces would stop the fellow’s mouth.

Thus his thoughts ran in a circle. Suddenly he fancied he heard the sound of horses’ hoofs from the road behind him. “Already?” was his first thought. He leaned over the side of the carriage to look backwards. All was clear. The carriage had driven past a farm, and the sound he had heard had been the echo of his own horse’s hoofs. The discovery of this momentary self-deception quieted his apprehensions for a time, so that it seemed to him the danger was over. He could now see the towers of Mantua. “Drive on, man, drive on,” he said under his breath, for he did not really wish the coachman to hear. The coachman, nearing the goal, had given the horse his head. Soon they reached the gate through which Casanova had left the town with Olivo less than forty-eight hours earlier. He told the coachman the name of the inn, and in a few minutes the carriage drew up at the sign of the Golden Lion.

CHAPTER ELEVEN.



CASANOVA LEAPED FROM the carriage. The hostess stood in the doorway. She was bright and smiling, in the mood apparently to give Casanova the warm welcome of a lover whose absence has been regretted and whose return has been eagerly desired. But Casanova looked warningly towards the coachman, implying that the man might be an inconvenient witness, and then told him to eat and drink to his heart's content.

"A letter from Venice arrived for you yesterday, Chevalier," announced the hostess.

"Another?" enquired Casanova, going upstairs to his room.

The hostess followed. A sealed despatch was lying on the table. Casanova opened it in great excitement. He was anxious lest it should prove to be a revocation of the former offer. But the missive contained no more than a few lines from Bragadino, enclosing a draft for two hundred and fifty lire, in order that Casanova, should he have made up his mind to accept, might instantly set out for Venice.

Turning to the hostess, Casanova explained with an air of well-simulated vexation that he was unfortunately compelled to continue his journey instantly. Were he to delay, he would risk losing the post which his friend Bragadino had procured for him in Venice, a post for which there were fully a hundred applicants. Threatening clouds gathered on the hostess' face, so Casanova was prompt to add that all he proposed was to make sure of the appointment and to receive his patent as secretary to the Supreme Council. As soon as he was installed in office, he would ask permission to return to Mantua, that he might arrange his affairs. Of course this request could not be refused. He was going to leave most of his effects here. When he returned, it would only depend upon his beloved and charming friend whether she would give up inn-keeping and accompany him to Venice as his wife. She threw her arms round his neck, and with brimming eyes asked him whether before starting he would not at least make a good breakfast, if she might bring it up to his room. He knew she had in mind to provide a farewell feast, and though he felt no appetite for it, he agreed to the suggestion simply to be rid of her.

As soon as she was gone, he packed his bag with such underclothing and books as he urgently needed. Then, making his way to the parlor, where the coachman was enjoying a generous meal, he asked the man whether, for a sum which was more than double the usual fare, he would with the same horse drive along the Venice road as far as the next posting station. The coachman agreed without demur, thus relieving Casanova of his principal anxiety for the time.

Now the hostess entered, flushed with annoyance, to ask whether he had forgotten that his breakfast was awaiting him in his room. Casanova nonchalantly replied that he had not forgotten for a moment, and begged her, since he was short of time, to take his draft to the bank, and to bring back the two hundred and fifty lire. While she was hastening to fetch the money, Casanova returned to his room, and began to eat with wolfish voracity. He continued his meal when the hostess came back; stopping merely for an instant to pocket the money she brought him.

When he had finished eating, he turned to the woman. Thinking that her hour had at length come, she had drawn near, and was pressing up against him in a manner which could not be misunderstood. He clasped her somewhat roughly, kissed her on both cheeks, and, although she was obviously ready to grant him the last favors then and there, exclaimed: "I must be off. Till our next meeting!" He tore himself away with such violence that she fell back on to the corner of the couch. Her expression, with its mingling of disappointment, rage, and impotence, was so irresistibly funny that Casanova, as he closed the door behind him, burst out

laughing.

The coachman could not fail to realize that his fare was in a hurry, but it was not his business to ask questions. He sat ready oil the box when Casanova came out of the inn, and whipped up the horse the very moment the passenger was seated. On his own initiative he decided not to drive through the town, but to skirt it, and to rejoin the posting road upon the other side. The sun was not yet high, for it was only nine o'clock. Casanova reflected: "It is likely enough that Lorenzi's body has not been found yet." He hardly troubled to think that he himself had killed Lorenzi. All he knew was that he was glad to be leaving Mantua farther and farther behind, and glad to have rest at last.

He fell into a deep sleep, the deepest he had ever known. It lasted practically two days and two nights. The brief interruptions to his slumbers necessitated by the change of horses from time to time, and the interruptions that occurred when he was sitting in inns, or walking up and down in front of posting stations, or exchanging a few casual words with postmasters, innkeepers, customhouse officers, and travellers, did not linger in his memory as individual details. Thus it came to pass that the remembrance of these two days and nights merged as it were into the dream he had dreamed in Marcolina's bed. Even the duel between the two naked men upon the green turf in the early sunshine seemed somehow to belong to this dream, wherein often enough, in enigmatic fashion, he was not Casanova but Lorenzi; not the victor but the vanquished; not the fugitive, but the slain round whose pale young body the lonely wind of morning played. Neither he nor Lorenzi was any more real than were the senators in the purple robes who had knelt before him like beggars; nor any less real than such as that old fellow leaning against the parapet of a bridge, to whom at nightfall he had thrown alms from the carriage. Had not Casanova bent his powers of reason to the task of distinguishing between real experiences and dream experiences, he might well have imagined that in Marcolina's arms he had fallen into a mad dream from which he did not awaken until he caught sight of the Campanile of Venice.

CHAPTER TWELVE



IT WAS ON the third morning of his journey that Casanova, having reached Mestre, sighted once more the bell tower after over twenty years of longing — a pillar of grey stone looming distantly in the twilight. It was but two leagues now to the beloved city in which he had been young. He paid the driver without remembering whether this was the fifth or the sixth with whom he had had to settle since quitting Mantua, and, followed by a lad carrying his baggage, walked through the mean streets to the harbor from which to-day, just as five-and-twenty years earlier, the boat was to leave for Venice at six in the morning.

The vessel seemed to have been waiting for him; hardly had he seated himself upon a narrow bench, among petty traders, manual workers, and women bringing their wares to market, when she cast off. It was a cloudy morning; mist was rolling across the lagoons; there was a smell of bilge-water, damp wood, fish, and fruit. The Campanile grew ever higher; additional towers appeared; cupolas became visible. The light of the morning sun was reflected from one roof, from two, from many. Individual houses were distinguishable, growing larger by degrees. Boats, great and small, showed through the mist; greetings were shouted from vessel to vessel. The chatter around him grew louder. A little girl offered him some grapes for sale. Munching the purple berries, he spat the skins over the side after the manner of his countrymen. He entered into friendly talk with someone who expressed satisfaction that the weather seemed to be clearing at last.

"What, has it been raining here for three days? That is news to me. I come from the south, from Naples and Rome."

The boat had entered the canals of the suburbs. Sordid houses stared at him with dirty windows, as if with vacant, hostile eyes. Twice or thrice the vessel stopped at a quay, and passengers came aboard; young fellows, one of whom had a great portfolio under his arm; women with baskets.

Here, at last, was familiar ground. Was not that the church where Martina used to go to confession? Was not that the house in which, after his own fashion, he had restored the pallid and dying Agatha to ruddy health? Was not that the place in which he had dealt with the charming Sylvia's rascal of a brother, had beaten the fellow black and blue? Up that canal to the right, in the small yellow house upon whose splashed steps the fat, bare-footed woman was standing....

Before he had fully recaptured the distant memory attaching to the house in question, the boat had entered the Grand Canal, and was passing slowly up the broad waterway with palaces on either hand. To Casanova, in his dreamy reflections, it seemed as if but yesterday he had traversed the same route.

He disembarked at the Rialto Bridge, for, before visiting Signor Bragadino, he wished to make sure of a room in a modest hostelry nearby — he knew where it was, though he could not recall the name. The place seemed more decayed, or at least more neglected, than he remembered it of old. A sulky waiter, badly in need of a shave, showed him to an uninviting room looking upon the blind wall of a house opposite. Casanova had no time to lose. Moreover, since he had spent nearly all his cash on the journey, the cheapness of these quarters was a great attraction. He decided, therefore, to make his lodging there for the present. Having removed the stains of travel, he deliberated for a while whether to put on his finer suit; then decided it was better to wear the soberer raiment, and walked out of the inn.

It was but a hundred paces, along a narrow alley and across a bridge, to Bragadino's small but elegant palace. A young servingman with a rather impudent manner took in Casanova's name in a way which implied that its celebrity had no meaning for him. Returning from his master's apartments with a more civil

demeanor, he bade the guest enter.

Bragadino was seated at breakfast beside the open window, and made as if to rise; but Casanova begged him not to disturb himself.

"My dear Casanova," exclaimed Bragadino, "How delighted I am to see you once more! Who would have thought we should ever meet again?" He extended both hands to the newcomer.

Casanova seized them as if to kiss them, but did not do so. He answered the cordial greeting with warm words of thanks in the grandiloquent manner usual to him on such occasions. Bragadino begged him to be seated, and asked him whether he had breakfasted. Told that his guest was still fasting, Bragadino rang for his servant and gave the necessary orders. As soon as the man had gone, Bragadino expressed his gratification that Casanova had so unreservedly accepted the Supreme Council's offer. He would certainly not suffer for having decided to devote himself to the service of his country. Casanova responded by saying that he would deem himself happy if he could but win the Council's approval.

Such were Casanova's words, while his thoughts ran on. He could no longer detect in himself any feeling of hatred towards Bragadino. Nay, he realized that he was rather sorry for this man advanced in years and grown a trifle foolish, who sat facing him with a sparse white beard and red-rimmed eyes, and whose skinny hand trembled as he held his cup. The last time Casanova had seen him, Bragadino had probably been about as old as Casanova was to-day; but even then, to Casanova, Bragadino had seemed an old man.

The servant brought in Casanova's breakfast. The guest needed little pressing to induce him to make a hearty meal, for on the road he had had no more than a few snacks.

"I have journeyed here from Mantua without pausing for a night's rest, so eager was I to show my readiness to serve the Council and to prove my undying gratitude to my benefactor." — This was his excuse for the almost unmannerly greed with which he gulped down the steaming chocolate.

Through the window, from the Grand Canal and the lesser canals, rose the manifold noises of Venetian life. All other sounds were dominated by the monotonous shouts of the gondoliers. Somewhere close at hand, perhaps in the opposite palace (was it not the Fogazzari palace?), a woman with a fine soprano voice was practising; the singer was young — someone who could not have been born at the time when Casanova escaped from The Leads.

He ate rolls and butter, eggs, cold meat, continually excusing himself for his outrageous hunger, while Bragadino looked on well pleased.

"I do like young people to have a healthy appetite," said the Senator. "As far as I can remember, my dear Casanova, you have always been a good trencherman!" He recalled to mind a meal which he and Casanova had enjoyed together in the early days of their acquaintance. "Or rather, as now, I sat looking on while you ate. I had not taken a long walk, as you had. It was shortly after you had kicked that physician out of the house, the man who had almost been the death of me with his perpetual bleedings."

They went on talking of old times — when life had been better in Venice than it was to-day.

"Not everywhere," said Casanova, with a smiling allusion to The Leads.

Bragadino waved away the suggestion, as if this were not a suitable time for a reference to such petty disagreeables. "Besides, you must know that I did everything I could to save you from punishment, though unfortunately my efforts proved unavailing. Of course, if in those days I had already been a member of the Council of Ten!"

This broached the topic of political affairs. Warming to his theme, the old man recovered much of the wit and liveliness of earlier days. He told Casanova many remarkable details concerning the unfortunate tendencies which had recently begun to affect some of the Venetian youth, and concerning the dangerous

intrigues of which infallible signs were now becoming manifest.

Casanova was thus well posted for his work. He spent the day in the gloomy chamber at the inn; and, simply as a means to secure calm after the recent excitements, he passed the hours in arranging his papers, and in burning those of which he wished to be rid. When evening fell, he made his way to the Café Quadri in the Square of St. Mark, since this was supposed to be the chief haunt of the freethinkers and revolutionists. Here he was promptly recognized by an elderly musician who had at one time been conductor of the orchestra in the San Samueli Theatre, where Casanova had been a violinist thirty years before. By this old acquaintance, and without any advances on his own part, he was introduced to the company. Most of them were young men, and many of their names were those which Bragadino had mentioned in the morning as belonging to persons of suspicious character.

But the name of Casanova did not produce upon his new acquaintances the effect which he felt himself entitled to anticipate. It was plain that most of them knew nothing more of Casanova than that, a great many years ago, he had for one reason or another, and perhaps for no reason at all, been imprisoned in The Leads; and that, surmounting all possible dangers, he had made his escape. The booklet wherein, some years earlier, he had given so lively a description of his flight, had not indeed passed unnoticed; but no one seemed to have read it with sufficient attention. Casanova found it amusing to reflect that it lay within his power to help everyone of these young gentlemen to a speedy personal experience of the conditions of prison life in The Leads, and to a realization of the difficulties of escape. He was far, however, from betraying the slightest trace that he harbored so ill-natured an idea. On the contrary, he was able to play the innocent and to adopt an amiable rôle. After his usual fashion, he entertained the company by recounting all sorts of lively adventures, describing them as experiences he had had during his last journey from Rome to Venice. In substance these incidents were true enough, but they all dated from fifteen or twenty years earlier. He secured an eager and interested audience.

Another member of the company announced as a noteworthy item of news that an officer of Mantua on a visit to a friend, a neighboring landowner, had been murdered, and that the robbers had stripped him to the skin. The story attracted no particular attention, for in those days such occurrences were far from rare. Casanova resumed his narrative where it had been interrupted, resumed it as if this Mantua affair concerned him just as little as it concerned the rest of the company. In fact, being now freed from a disquiet whose existence he had hardly been willing to admit even to himself, his manner became brighter and bolder than ever.

It was past midnight when, after a light-hearted farewell, he walked alone across the wide, empty square. The heavens were veiled in luminous mist. He moved with the confident step of a sleep-walker. Without being really conscious that he was on a path which he had not traversed for five-and-twenty years, he found the way through tortuous alleys, between dark houses, and over narrow bridges. At length he reached the dilapidated inn, and had to knock repeatedly before the door was opened to him with a slow unfriendliness.

When, a few minutes later, having but half undressed, he threw himself upon his uneasy pallet, he was overwhelmed with a weariness amounting to pain, while upon his lips was a bitter after-taste which seemed to permeate his whole being. Thus, at the close of his long exile, did he first woo sleep in the city to which he had so eagerly desired to return. And here, when morning was about to break, the heavy and dreamless sleep of exhaustion came to console the aging adventurer.

THE END

POSTFACE



IT IS A historical fact that Casanova visited Voltaire at Ferney. There is, however, no historical warrant for the account of the matter given in the foregoing novel, and still less for the statement that Casanova wrote a polemic against Voltaire. It is a historical fact, likewise, that Casanova, when between fifty and sixty years of age, found it necessary to enter Venetian service as a spy. Of this, and of many other doings of the celebrated adventurer to which casual allusion is made in the course of the novel, fuller and more accurate accounts will be found in Casanova's *Memoirs*. Speaking generally, nevertheless, *Casanova's Homecoming* is to be regarded throughout as a work of fiction.

A. S.

Rhapsody (1925)



A DREAM NOVEL

Original German Title: 'Traumnovelle'

Translated by Otto P. Schinnerer, 1927

This short novel deals with the thoughts and psychological transformations of Fridolin, a successful 35-year-old doctor, over a two-day period, after his wife Albertina confesses having had sexual fantasies involving another man. In this short time, he meets many strange characters populating an eerie world of seduction and secrets. This culminates in the masquerade ball, an event of masked identity, sex and unforeseen danger for Doctor Fridolin, the obvious outsider.

The novel was first published in instalments in the magazine *Die Dame* between December 1925 and March 1926. The first book edition was printed in 1926 by S. Fischer Verlag. Interestingly, the 1999 film *Eyes Wide Shut* by director-screenwriter Stanley Kubrick is loosely based on the novel. Prior to this film, *Traumnovelle* had been adapted for Austrian television in 1969, as an Italian film entitled *Il cavaliere, la morte e il diavolo* in 1983 and as a low-budget Italian film entitled *Nightmare in Venice* in 1989.

TRAUMNOVELLE

VON

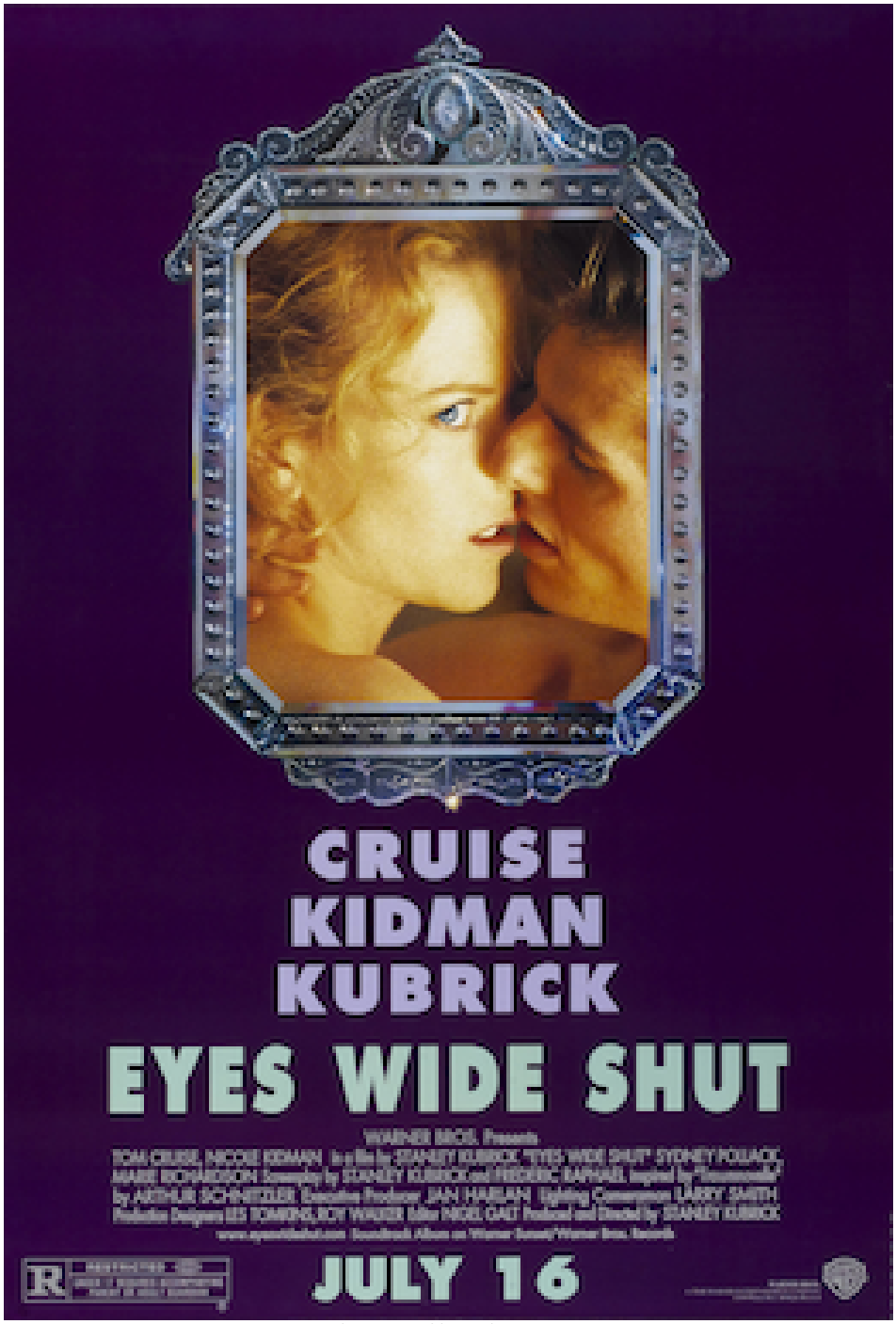
ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

S. FISCHER VERLAG / BERLIN
1926

The first edition's title page

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The 1999 film adaptation

1

"TWENTY-FOUR BROWN-SKINNED SLAVES rowed the splendid galley which was to bring Prince Amgiad to the palace of the caliph. The Prince, wrapped in his purple cloak, lay alone on the deck under the dark-blue, starry sky, and his gaze—"

So far the little girl had read aloud. Then, suddenly, her eyelids drooped. Her parents looked at each other and smiled. Fridolin bent down, kissed her blond hair and closed the book which was lying on the untidy table. The child looked up as if caught at some mischief.

"It's nine o'clock," her father said, "and time you were in bed." Albertina also bent over her, and as her hand met her husband's on the beloved forehead, they looked at each other with a tender smile not meant for the child. The governess entered and asked the little girl to say good-night. She got up obediently, kissed her father and mother and walked out quietly hand in hand with the young woman. Fridolin and Albertina, left alone under the reddish glow of the hanging-lamp, continued the conversation they had begun before supper.

It dealt with their experiences the night before at the masquerade ball. They had decided to attend it just before the end of the carnival period, as their first one of the season. No sooner had Fridolin entered the ball-room than he was greeted, like a long lost friend, by two women in red dominoes. He had no idea who they were, although they were unusually well-informed about many affairs of his student days and internship. They had invited him into a box with great friendliness, but had left again with the promise that they would soon return without masks. When they did not appear, he became impatient and went down to the ball-room floor hoping to meet them again, but eagerly as he scanned the room, he could not see them anywhere. Instead, however, another woman unexpectedly took his arm. It was his wife. She had just freed herself from the company of a stranger whose blasé manner and apparently Polish accent had at first charmed her. Suddenly he had offended her — frightened her by a rather common and impertinent remark. Fridolin and Albertina were glad to have escaped from a disappointingly commonplace masquerade prank, and soon sat like two lovers, among the other couples, in the buffet, eating oysters and drinking champagne. They chatted gaily, as though they had just made each other's acquaintance, acting a comedy of courting, bashful resistance, seduction and surrender. After driving home quickly through the snowy winter night, they sank into each other's arms and were more blissful in their ardent love than they had been for a long time. The gray of morning awakened them only too soon. Fridolin's profession summoned him to his patients at an early hour, while Albertina would not stay in bed longer because of her duties as housewife and mother. So the ensuing hours passed, soberly and predetermined, in daily routine and work, and the events of the night before, both those at the beginning and at the end, had faded.

But now that the day's work was done — the child had gone to bed and no disturbance was likely — the shadowy forms of the masquerade, the melancholy stranger and the red dominoes, rose again into reality. And all at once those insignificant events were imbued, magically and painfully, with the deceptive glow of neglected opportunities. Harmless but probing questions, and sly, ambiguous answers were exchanged. Neither failed to notice that the other was not absolutely honest, and so they became slightly vindictive. They exaggerated the degree of attraction that their unknown partners at the ball had exerted upon them while each made fun of the other's tendencies to jealousy and denied his own. Soon, their light conversation about the trifling matters of the night before changed into a more serious discussion of those hidden, scarcely suspected wishes, which can produce dangerous whirlpools even in the serenest and purest soul. They spoke of those

mysterious regions of which they were hardly conscious but toward which the incomprehensible wind of fate might some day drive them, even if only in their dreams. For though they were united in thought and feeling, they knew that the preceding day had not been the first time that the spirit of adventure, freedom and danger had beckoned them. Uneasy, and tormenting themselves, each sought with disingenuous curiosity to draw out confessions from the other. Anxiously, they searched within themselves for some indifferent fact, or trifling experience, which might express the inexpressible, and the honest confession of which might relieve them of the strain and the suspicion which were becoming unbearable.

Whether Albertina was more impatient, more honest or more kind-hearted of the two, it was she who first summoned the courage for a frank confession. She asked Fridolin in a rather uncertain voice whether he remembered the young man who — last summer at the seashore in Denmark — had been sitting one evening with two other officers at an adjoining table. He had received a telegram during dinner, whereupon he had hastily said "good-bye" to his friends.

Fridolin nodded. "What about him?" he asked.

"I'd already seen him in the morning," she replied, "as he was hurrying up the stairs in the hotel with his yellow hand-bag. He looked at me as he passed, but didn't stop until he had gone a few more steps. Then he turned and our eyes met. He didn't smile; in fact, it seemed to me that he scowled. I suppose I did the same, for I was very much stirred. That whole day I lay on the beach, lost in dreams. Had he called me — I thought — I could not have resisted. I thought I was ready for anything. I had practically resolved to give up you, the child, my future, and at the same time — if you can understand it? — you were dearer to me than ever. That same afternoon — surely you remember — we discussed many things very intimately, among others our common future, and our child. At sunset you and I were sitting on the balcony, when, down below on the beach, he passed without looking up. I was extremely thrilled to see him, but I stroked your forehead and kissed your hair, and my love for you was both sorrowful and compassionate. That evening at dinner I wore a white rose and you yourself said I was very beautiful. Perhaps it wasn't mere chance that the stranger and his friends sat near us. He didn't look at me, but I considered getting up, walking over to him and saying: Here I am, my beloved for whom I have waited — take me. At that moment the telegram was handed to him. He read it, turned pale, whispered a few words to the younger of the two officers — and glancing at me mysteriously he left the room."

"And then?" Fridolin asked dryly when she stopped.

"That is all. I remember that I woke the next morning with a restless anxiety. I don't know whether I was afraid that he had left or that he might still be there. But when he didn't appear at noon, I breathed a sigh of relief. Don't ask any more, Fridolin. I've told you the whole truth. And you, too, had some sort of experience at the seashore — I know it."

Fridolin rose, walked up and down the room several times and then said: "You're right." He was standing at the window, his face in shadow and in a hoarse and slightly hostile voice he began: "In the morning, sometimes very early before you got up, I used to stroll along the beach, out beyond the town. Even at that hour the sun was always shining over the sea, bright and strong. Out there on the beach, as you know, were cottages, each one standing like a world in itself. Some had fenced-in gardens, others were surrounded only by the woods. The bathing-huts were separated from the cottages by the road and part of the beach. I hardly ever met people at such an early hour, and bathers were never out. One morning, quite suddenly, I noticed the figure of a woman. She had suddenly appeared on the narrow ledge of a bathing-hut, which rested on piles driven into the sand. She was cautiously advancing, placing one foot before the other, her arms extended backward against the wooden boards. She was quite a young girl, possibly fifteen years old, with loose blond

hair hanging over her shoulders and on one side over her delicate breast. She was looking down into the water and was slowly moving along the wall, her gaze lowered in the direction of the far corner. All at once she stopped opposite me and reached far back with her arms as though trying to secure a firmer hold. Looking up, she suddenly saw me. A tremor passed through her body, as though she wished to drop into the water or run. But as she could move only very slowly on the narrow ledge, she had to stay where she was. She stood there with a face expressing at first fright, then anger, and finally embarrassment. All at once, however, she smiled, smiled marvellously. Her eyes welcomed me, beckoned to me, and at the same time slightly mocked me, as she glanced at the strip of water between us. Then she stretched her young and slender body, glad of her beauty, and proudly and sweetly stirred by my obvious admiration. We stood facing each other for perhaps ten seconds, with half-open lips and dazzled eyes. Involuntarily I stretched out my arms to her; her eyes expressed surrender and joy. Then she shook her head vigorously, took one arm from the wall and commanded me with a gesture to go away. When I didn't at once obey, her childlike eyes turned on me such a beseeching look that there was nothing for me to do but to go, and I went as quickly as possible. I did not look back once — not because I felt considerate, obedient or chivalrous, but because in her last glance I sensed an emotion so intense, so far beyond anything I had ever experienced, that I was not far from fainting." And he stopped.

With her eyes cast down and in a monotonous voice, Albertina asked: "And how often did you see her after that?"

"What I have told you," Fridolin answered, "happened on the last day of our stay in Denmark. Otherwise I don't know what might have taken place. You, too, mustn't ask any more, Albertina."

He was still standing at the window, motionless as Albertina arose and walked over to him. There were tears in her eyes and a slight frown on her face. "In the future let's always tell each other such things at once," she said.

He nodded in silence.

"Will you promise me?"

He took her into his arms. "Don't you know that?" he asked. But his voice was still harsh.

She took his hands and looked up at him with misty eyes, in the depths of which he could read her thoughts. She was thinking of his other and more real experiences, those of his young manhood, many of which she knew about. When they were first married he had yielded, all too readily, to her jealous curiosity and had told her (indeed it often seemed to him) had surrendered to her many secrets which he should rather have kept to himself. He knew that she was inevitably reminded of these affairs and he was hardly surprised when she murmured the half-forgotten name of one of his early sweethearts. It sounded to him a little like a reproach, or was it a covert threat?

He raised her hands to his lips.

"You may believe me, even though it sounds trite, that in every woman I thought I loved it was always you I was looking for — I know that better than you can understand it, Albertina."

A dispirited smile passed over her face.

"And suppose before meeting you, I, too, had gone on a search for a mate?" she asked. The look in her eyes changed, becoming cool and impenetrable, and he allowed her hands to slip from his, as though he had caught her lying or committing a breach of faith. She, however, continued:

"Oh, if you men *knew!*" and again was silent.

"If we knew —? What do you mean by that?"

In a strangely harsh voice she replied:

“About what you imagine, my dear.”

“Albertina! — then there is something that you’ve kept from me?”

She nodded, and looked down with a strange smile. Incomprehensible, monstrous doubts crossed his mind.

“I don’t quite understand,” he said. “You were barely seventeen when we became engaged.”

“Past sixteen, yes, Fridolin. But it wasn’t my fault that I was a virgin when I became your wife.” She looked at him brightly.

“Albertina —!”

But she continued:

“It was a beautiful summer evening at Lake Wörther, just before our engagement, and a very handsome young man stood before my window that overlooked a large and spacious meadow. As we talked I thought to myself — just listen to this — what a charming young man that is — he would only have to say the word — it would have to be the right one, certainly — and I would go out with him into the meadow or the woods — or it would be even more beautiful in a boat on the lake — and I would grant him this night anything he might desire. That is what I thought to myself. — But he didn’t say a word, that charming young man. He only kissed my hand tenderly — and next morning he asked me — if I would be his wife. And I said yes.”

Fridolin was annoyed and dropped her hand. “And if,” he said, “someone else had stood by your window that night and the right word had occurred to him, if it had been, for instance—” He was considering, but she raised her hand protestingly.

“Any other man — no matter who — could have said anything he liked — it would have been useless. And if it hadn’t been you standing by the window, then very likely the summer evening wouldn’t have been so beautiful.” And she smiled at him.

There was a scornful expression about his mouth. “Yes, that’s what you say now. Perhaps you even believe it at this moment. But—”

There was a knock on the door. The maid entered and said that the housekeeper from Schreyvogel Strasse had come to fetch the doctor, as the Privy Councilor was very low again. Fridolin went out into the hall, and when the woman told him that the Councilor had had a very serious heart attack, he promised to come at once.

As he was leaving, Albertina asked: “You’re going away?” She said it with as much annoyance as if he were deliberately doing her an injustice.

Fridolin replied, with astonishment: “I suppose I’ve got to.”

She sighed regretfully.

“I hope it won’t be very serious,” said Fridolin. “Up to now three centigrams of morphine have always pulled him through.”

The maid brought his fur coat, and absent-mindedly kissing Albertina on her forehead and mouth, as if everything during the last hour had been completely forgotten, he hurried away.

2

WHEN FRIDOLIN REACHED the street, he unbuttoned his coat. It had suddenly begun to thaw; the snow on the sidewalk was almost gone, and there was a touch of spring in the air. It was less than a quarter of an hour's walk to Schreyvogel Strasse from his home near the General Hospital, and he soon reached the old house. He walked up the dimly lighted winding staircase to the second floor and pulled the bell-rope. But before the old-fashioned bell was heard, he noticed that the door was ajar, and entering through the unlighted foyer into the living room he saw at once that he had come too late. The green-shaded kerosene lamp which was hanging from the low ceiling cast a dim light on the bedspread under which a lean body lay motionless. Fridolin knew the old man so well that he seemed to see the face plainly, although it was outside the circle of light — the high forehead, the thin and lined cheeks, the snow-white beard and also the strikingly ugly ears with coarse, white hairs. At the foot of the bed sat Marianne, the Councilor's daughter, completely exhausted, her arms hanging limply from her shoulders. An odor of old furniture, medicine, petroleum and cooking pervaded the room, and in addition to that there was a trace of eau de Cologne and scented soap. Fridolin also noticed the indefinite, sweetish scent of this pale girl who was still young and who had been slowly fading for months and years under the stress of severe household duties, nursing and night watches.

When the doctor entered she looked up, but because of the dim light he could not see whether she had blushed, as usual, when he appeared. She started to rise, but he stopped her with a movement of his hand, and so she merely greeted him with a nod, her eyes large and sad. He stepped to the head of the bed and mechanically placed his hands on the forehead of the dead man and on the arms which were lying on the bed-spread in loose and open shirt sleeves. His shoulders drooped with a slight expression of regret. He stuck his hands into the pockets of his coat and his eyes wandered about the room until they finally rested on Marianne. Her hair was blond and thick, but dry; her neck well-formed and slender, although a little wrinkled and rather yellow; and her lips were thin and firmly pressed together.

"Well, my dear Marianne," he said in a slightly embarrassed whisper, "you weren't entirely unprepared for this."

She held out her hand to him. He took it sympathetically and inquired about the particulars of the final, fatal attack. She reported briefly and to the point, and then spoke of her father's last comparatively easy days, during which Fridolin had not seen him. Drawing up a chair, he sat down opposite her, and tried to console her by saying that her father must have suffered very little at the last. He then asked if any of her relatives had been notified. Yes, she said, the housekeeper had already gone to tell her uncle, and very likely Doctor Roediger would soon appear. "My fiancé," she added, and did not look him straight in the eye.

Fridolin simply nodded. During the year he had met Doctor Roediger two or three times in the Councilor's house. The pale young man — an instructor in History at the University of Vienna — was of an unusually slender build with a short, blond beard and spectacles, and had made quite a good impression upon him, without, however, arousing his interest beyond that. Marianne would certainly look better, he thought to himself, if she were his mistress. Her hair would be less dry, her lips would be fuller and redder. I wonder how old she is, he reflected. The first time I attended the Councilor, three or four years ago, she was twenty-three. At that time her mother was still living and she was more cheerful than now. She even took singing lessons for a while. So she is going to marry this instructor! I wonder why? She surely isn't in love with him, and he isn't likely to have much money either. What kind of a marriage will it turn out to be? Probably like a

thousand others. But it's none of my business. It's quite possible that I shall never see her again, since there's nothing more for me to do here. Well, many others that I cared for have gone the same way.

As these thoughts passed through his mind, Marianne began to speak of her father — with fervor — as if his death had suddenly made him a more remarkable person. Then he was really only fifty-four years old? Well, of course, he had had so many worries and disappointments — his wife always ill — and his son such a grief! What, she had a brother? Certainly, she had once told the doctor about him. Her brother was now living somewhere abroad. A picture that he had painted when he was fifteen was hanging over there in Marianne's room. It represented an officer galloping down a hill. Her father had always pretended not to see it although it wasn't bad. Oh yes, if he'd had a chance her brother might have made something of himself.

How excitedly she speaks, Fridolin thought, and how bright her eyes are! Is it fever? Quite possibly. She's grown much thinner. Probably has tuberculosis.

She kept up her stream of talk, but it seemed to him that she didn't quite know what she was saying. It was twelve years since her brother had left home. In fact, she had been a child when he disappeared. They had last heard from him four or five years ago, at Christmas, from a small city in Italy. Strange to say, she had forgotten the name. She continued like this for a while, almost incoherently. Suddenly she stopped and sat there silently, her head resting in her hands. Fridolin was tired and even more bored. He was anxiously waiting for some one to come, tier relatives, or her fiancé. The silence in the room was oppressive. It seemed to him that the dead man joined in the silence, deliberately and with malicious joy.

With a side glance at the corpse, he said: "At any rate, Fräulein Marianne, as things are now, it is fortunate that you won't have to stay in this house very much longer." And when she raised her head a little, without, however, looking at Fridolin, he continued: "I suppose your fiancé will soon get a professorship. The chances for promotion are more favorable in the Faculty of Philosophy than with us in Medicine." He was thinking that, years ago, he also had aspired to an academic career, but because he wanted a comfortable income, he had finally decided to practice medicine. Suddenly he felt that compared with this noble Doctor Roediger, he was the inferior.

"We shall move soon," said Marianne listlessly, "he has a post at the University of Göttingen."

"Oh," said Fridolin, and was about to congratulate her but it seemed rather out of place at the moment. He glanced at the closed window, and without asking for permission but availing himself of his privilege as a doctor, he opened both casements and let some air in. It had become even warmer and more spring-like, and the breeze seemed to bring with it a slight fragrance of the distant awakening woods. When he turned back into the room, he saw Marianne's eyes fixed upon him with a questioning look. He moved nearer to her and said: "I hope the fresh air will be good for you. It has become quite warm, and last night" — he was about to say: we drove home from the masquerade in a snowstorm, but he quickly changed the sentence and continued: "Last night the snow was still lying on the streets a foot and a half deep."

She hardly heard what he said. Her eyes became moist, large tears streamed down her cheeks and again she buried her face in her hands. In spite of himself, he placed his hand on her head, caressing it. He could feel her body beginning to tremble, and her sobs which were at first very quiet, gradually became louder and finally quite unrestrained. All at once she slipped down from her chair and lay at Fridolin's feet, clasping his knees with her arms and pressing her face against them. Then she looked up to him with large eyes, wild with grief, and whispered ardently: "I don't want to leave here. Even if you never return, if I am never to see you again, I want, at least, to live near you."

He was touched rather than surprised, for he had always known that she either was, or imagined herself to be, in love with him.

“Please — get up, Marianne,” he said softly and bending down he gently raised her. Of course, she is hysterical, he remarked to himself and he glanced at her dead father. I wonder if he hears everything, he thought. Perhaps he isn’t really dead. Perhaps everyone in the first hours after passing away, is only in a coma. He put his arms about her in a very hesitating embrace, and almost against his will he kissed her on the forehead, an act that somehow seemed rather ridiculous. He had a fleeting recollection of reading a novel years ago in which a young man, still almost a boy, had been seduced, in fact, practically raped, by the friend of his mother at the latter’s deathbed. At the same time he thought of his wife, without knowing why, and he was conscious of some bitterness and a vague animosity against the man with the yellow hand-bag on the hotel stairs in Denmark. He held Marianne closer, but without the slightest emotion. The sight of her lustreless, dry hair, the indefinite, sweetish scent of her unaired dress gave him a slight feeling of revulsion. The bell outside rang again, and feeling he was released, he hastily kissed Marianne’s hand, as if in gratitude, and went to open the door. Doctor Roediger stood there, in a dark gray top-coat, an umbrella in his hand and a serious face, appropriate to the occasion. The two men greeted each other much more cordially than was called for by their actual state of acquaintance. Then they stepped into the room. After an embarrassed look at the deceased, Roediger expressed his sympathy to Marianne, while Fridolin went into the adjoining room to write out the official death-certificate. He turned up the gas-light over the desk and his eyes fell upon the picture of the white-uniformed officer, galloping down hill, with drawn sabre, to meet an invisible enemy. It hung in a narrow frame of dull gold and rather resembled a modest chromo-lithograph.

With his death-certificate filled out, Fridolin returned to the room where the engaged couple sat, hand in hand, by the bed of the dead Councilor.

Again the door-bell rang and Doctor Roediger rose to answer it. While he was gone, Marianne, with her eyes on the floor, said, almost inaudibly: “I love you,” and Fridolin answered by pronouncing her name tenderly. Then Roediger came back with an elderly couple, Marianne’s uncle and aunt, and a few words, appropriate to the occasion, were exchanged, with the usual embarrassment in the presence of one who has just died. The little room suddenly seemed crowded with mourners. Fridolin felt superfluous, took his leave and was escorted to the door by Roediger who said a few words of gratitude and expressed the hope of seeing him soon again.

3



WHEN FRIDOLIN STOOD on the street in front of the house, he looked up at the window which he himself had opened a little while before. The casements were swaying slightly in the wind of early spring, and the people who remained behind them up there, the living as well as the dead, all seemed unreal and phantom like. He felt as if he had escaped from something, not so much from an adventure, but rather from a melancholy spell the power of which he was trying to break. He felt strangely disinclined to go home. The snow in the streets had melted, except where little heaps of dirty white had been piled up on either side of the curb. The gas-flame in the street lamps flickered and a nearby church bell struck eleven. Fridolin decided that before going to bed, he would spend a half hour in a quiet nook of a café near his residence. As he walked through Rathaus Park he noticed here and there on benches standing in the shadow, that couples were sitting, clasped together, just as if Spring had actually arrived and no danger were lurking in the deceptive, warm air. A tramp in tattered clothes was lying full length on a bench with his hat over his face. Suppose I wake him and give him some money for a night's lodging, Fridolin thought. But what good would that do? Then I would have to provide for the next night, too, or there'd be no sense in it, and in the end I might be suspected of having criminal relations with him. He quickened his steps to escape as rapidly as possible from all responsibility and temptation. And why only this one? he asked himself. There are thousands of such poor devils in Vienna alone. It's manifestly impossible to help all of them or to worry about all the poor wretches! He was reminded of the dead man he had just left, and shuddered; in fact, he felt slightly nauseated at the thought that decay and decomposition, according to eternal laws, had already begun their work in the lean body under the brown flannel blanket. He was glad that he was still alive, and in all probability these ugly things were still far removed from him. He was, in fact, still in the prime of youth, he had a charming and lovable wife and could have several women in addition, if he happened to want them, although, to be sure, such affairs required more leisure than was his. He then remembered that he would have to be in his ward at the hospital at eight in the morning, visit his private patients from eleven to one, keep office hours from three to five, and that even in the evening he had several appointments to visit patients. Well, he hoped that it would be some time before he would again be called out so late at night. As he crossed Rathaus Square, which had a dull gleam like a brownish pond, and turned homeward, he heard the muffled sound of marching steps in the distance. Then he saw, still quite far away, a small group of fraternity students, six or eight in number, turning a corner and coming towards him. When the light of a street lamp fell upon them he thought he recognized them, with their blue caps, as members of the Alemannia, for although he had never belonged to a fraternity, he had fought a few sabre duels in his time. In thinking of his student days he was reminded again of the red dominoes who had lured him into a box at the ball the night before and then had so shamefully deserted him. The students were quite near now; they were laughing and talking loudly. Perhaps one or two of them were from the hospital? But it was impossible to see their faces plainly because of the dim light, and he had to stay quite close to the houses so as not to collide with them. Now they had passed. Only the one in the rear, a tall fellow with open overcoat and a bandage over his left eye, seemed to lag behind, and deliberately bumped into him with his raised elbow. It couldn't have been mere chance. What's got into that fellow? Fridolin thought, and involuntarily he stopped. The other took two more steps and turned. They looked at each other for a moment with only a short distance separating them. Suddenly Fridolin turned around again and went on. He heard a short laugh behind him and he longed to challenge the fellow, but he felt his heart beating

strangely, just as it had on a previous occasion, twelve or fourteen years before. There had been an unusually loud knock on his door while he had had with him a certain charming young creature who was never tired of prattling about her jealous fiancé. As a matter of fact, it was only the postman who had knocked in such a threatening manner. And now he felt his heart beating just as it had at that time. What's the meaning of this? he asked himself, and he noticed that his knees were shaking a little. Am I a coward? Oh! nonsense, he reassured himself. Why should I go and face a drunken student, I, a man of thirty-five, a practising physician, a married man and father of a child? Formal challenge! Seconds! A duel! And perhaps because of such a silly encounter receive a cut in my arm and be unable to perform my professional duties? — Or lose an eye? — Or even get blood-poisoning? — And in a week perhaps be in the same position as the man in Schreyvogel Strasse under the brown flannel blanket? Coward —? He had fought three sabre duels, and had even been ready to fight a duel with pistols, and it wasn't at his request that the matter had been called off. And what about his profession! There were dangers lurking everywhere and at all times — except that one usually forgets about them. Why, how long ago was it that that child with diphtheria had coughed in his face? Only three or four days, that's all. After all, that was much more dangerous than a little fencing match with sabres, and he hadn't given it a second thought. Well, if he ever met that fellow again, the affair could still be straightened out. He was by no means bound by the code of honor to take a silly encounter with a student seriously when on an errand of mercy, to or from a patient. But if, for instance, he should meet the young Dane with whom Albertina — oh, nonsense, what was he thinking of? Well, after all, it was just as bad as if she had been his mistress. Even worse. Yes, just let that fellow cross his path! What a joy it would be to face him somewhere in a clearing in the woods and aim a pistol at his forehead with its smoothly combed blond hair.

He suddenly discovered that he had passed his destination. He was in a narrow street in which only a few doubtful-looking women were strolling about in a pitiful attempt to bag their game. It's phantom like, he thought. And in retrospect the students, too, with their blue caps, suddenly seemed unreal. The same was true of Marianne, her fiancé, her uncle and aunt, all of whom he pictured standing hand in hand around the deathbed of the old Councilor. Albertina, too, whom he could see in his mind's eye soundly sleeping, her arms folded under her head — even his child lying in the narrow white brass bed, rolled up in a heap, and the red-cheeked governess with the mole on her left temple — all of them seemed to belong to another world. Although this idea made him shudder a bit, it also reassured him, for it seemed to free him from all responsibility, and to loosen all the bonds of human relationship.

One of the girls wandering about stopped him. She was still a young and pretty little thing, very pale with red-painted lips. She also might lead to a fatal end, only not as quickly, he thought. Is this cowardice too? I suppose really it is. He heard her steps and then her voice behind him. "Won't you come with me, doctor?"

He turned around involuntarily. "How do you know who I am?" he asked.

"Why, I don't know you," she said, "but here in this part of town they're all doctors, aren't they?"

He had had no relations with a woman of this sort since he had been a student at the *Gymnasium.* Was the attraction this girl had for him a sign that he was suddenly reverting to adolescence? He recalled a casual acquaintance, a smart young man, who was supposed to be extremely successful with women. Once while Fridolin was a student he had been sitting with him in an all-night café, after a ball. When the young man proposed to leave with one of the regular girls of the place, Fridolin looked at him in surprise. Thereupon he answered: "After all, it's the most convenient way — and they aren't by any means the worst."

"What's your name?" Fridolin asked the girl.

"Well, what do you think? Mizzi, of course." She unlocked the house-door, stepped into the hallway and

waited for Fridolin to follow her.

"Come on," she said when he hesitated. He stepped in beside her, the door closed behind him, she locked it, lit a wax candle and went ahead, lighting the way. — Am I mad? he asked himself. Of course I shall have nothing to do with her.

An oil-lamp was burning in her room, and she turned it up. It was a fairly pleasant place and neatly kept. At any rate, it smelled fresher than Marianne's home, for instance. But then, of course, no old man had been lying ill there for months. The girl smiled, and without forwardness approached Fridolin who gently kept her at a distance. She pointed to a rocking-chair into which he was glad to drop.

"You must be very tired," she remarked. He nodded. Undressing without haste, she continued: "Well, no wonder, with all the things a man like you has to do in the course of a day. We have an easier time of it."

He noticed that her lips were not painted, as he had thought, but were a natural red, and he complimented her on that.

"But why should I rouge?" she inquired. "How old do you think I am?"

"Twenty?" Fridolin ventured.

"Seventeen," she said, and sat on his lap, putting her arms around his neck like a child.

Who in the world would suspect that I'm here in this room at this moment? Fridolin thought. I'd never have thought it possible an hour or even ten minutes ago. And — why? Why am I here? Her lips were seeking his, but he drew back his head. She looked at him with sad surprise and slipped down from his lap. He was sorry, for he had felt much comforting tenderness in her embrace.

She took a red dressing-gown which was hanging over the foot of the open bed, slipped into it and folded her arms over her breast so that her entire body was concealed.

"Does this suit you better?" she asked without mockery, almost timidly, as though making an effort to understand him. He hardly knew what to answer.

"You're right," he said. "I am really tired, and I find it very pleasant sitting here in the rocking-chair and simply listening to you. You have such a nice gentle voice. Just talk to me."

She sat down on the couch and shook her head.

"You're simply afraid," she said softly — and then to herself in a barely audible voice: "It's too bad."

These last words made the blood race through his veins. He walked over to her, longing to touch her, and declared that he trusted her implicitly and saying so he spoke the truth. He put his arms around her and wooed her like a sweetheart, like a beloved woman, but she resisted, until he felt ashamed and finally gave it up.

She explained: "You never can tell, some time or other it's bound to get out. It's quite right of you to be afraid. If something should happen, you would curse me." She was so positive in refusing the banknotes which he offered her that he did not insist. She put a little blue woollen shawl about her shoulders, lit a candle to light him downstairs, went down with him and unlocked the door. "I'm not going out any more tonight," she said. He took her hand and involuntarily kissed it. She looked up to him astonished, almost frightened. Then she laughed, embarrassed and happy. "Just as if I were a young lady," she said.

The door closed behind Fridolin and he quickly made a mental note of the street number, so as to be able to send the poor little thing some wine and cakes the following day.

4

MEANWHILE IT HAD become even milder outside. A fragrance from dewy meadows and distant mountains drifted with the gentle breezes into the narrow street. Where shall I go now? Fridolin asked himself, as though it weren't the obvious thing to go home to bed. But he couldn't persuade himself to do so. He felt homeless, an outcast, since his annoying meeting with the students... or was it since Marianne's confession? No, it was longer than that — ever since this evening's conversation with Albertina he was moving farther and farther away from his everyday existence into some strange and distant world.

He wandered about aimlessly through the dark streets, letting the breeze blow through his hair. Finally, he turned resolutely into a third-rate coffee-house. The place was dimly lighted and not especially large, but it had an old-fashioned, cozy air about it, and was almost empty at this late hour.

Three men were playing cards in a corner. The waiter who had been watching them helped Fridolin take off his fur coat, took his order and placed illustrated journals and evening papers on his table. Fridolin felt slightly more secure and began to look through the papers. His eyes were arrested here and there by some news item. In some Bohemian city, street signs with German names had been torn down. There was a conference in Constantinople in which Lord Cranford took part about constructing a railway in Asia Minor. The firm Benies & Weingruber had gone into bankruptcy. The prostitute Anna Tiger, in a fit of jealousy, had attempted to throw vitriol on her friend, Hermine Drobizky. An Ash Wednesday fish-dinner was being given that evening in Sophia Hall. Marie B. a young girl residing at No. 28 Schönbrunn Strasse, had poisoned herself with mercuric chloride. — Prosaically commonplace as they were, all these facts, the insignificant as well as the sad, had a sobering and reassuring effect on Fridolin. He felt sorry for the young girl, Marie B. How stupid to take mercuric chloride! At this very moment, while he was sitting snugly in the café, while Albertina was calmly sleeping, and the Councilor had passed beyond all human suffering, Marie B. No. 28 Schönbrunn Strasse, was writhing in incredible pain.

He looked up from his paper and encountered the gaze of a man seated opposite. Was it possible? Nachtigall —? The latter had already recognized him, threw up his hands in pleased surprise and joined him at his table. He was still a young man, tall, rather broad, and none too thin. His long, blond, slightly curly hair had a touch of gray in it, and his moustache drooped in Polish fashion. He was wearing an open gray top-coat, underneath which were visible a greasy dress-suit, a crumpled shirt with three false diamond studs, a crinkled collar and a dangling, white silk tie. His eyelids were inflamed, as if from many sleepless nights, but his blue eyes gleamed brightly.

"You here in Vienna, Nachtigall?" exclaimed Fridolin.

"Didn't you know?" said Nachtigall with a soft, Polish accent and a slightly Jewish twang. "How could you miss it, and me so famous?" He laughed loudly and good-naturedly, and sat down opposite Fridolin.

"What," asked Fridolin, "have you been appointed Professor of Surgery without my hearing of it?"'

Nachtigall laughed still louder. "Didn't you hear me just now, just a minute ago?"

"What do you mean — hear you? — Why, of course." Suddenly it occurred to him that someone had been playing the piano when he entered; in fact, he had heard music coming from some basement as he approached the café. "So that was you playing?" he exclaimed.

"It was," Nachtigall said, laughing.

Fridolin nodded. Why, of course — the strangely vigorous touch, the peculiar, but euphonious bass chords

had at once seemed familiar to him. “Are you devoting yourself entirely to it?” he asked. He remembered that Nachtigall had definitely given up the study of medicine after his second preliminary examination in zoology, which he had passed although he was seven years late in taking it. Since then he had been hanging around the hospital, the dissecting room, the laboratories and classrooms for some time afterwards. With his blond artist’s head, his crinkled collar, his dangling tie that had once been white, he had been a striking and, in the humorous sense, popular figure. He had been much liked, not only by his fellow-students, but also by many professors. The son of a Jewish ginshop owner in a small Polish town, he had left home early and had come to Vienna to study medicine. The trifling sums he received from his parents had from the very beginning been scarcely worth mention and were soon discontinued. However, this didn’t prevent his appearing in the Riedhof Hotel at the table reserved for medical students where Fridolin was a regular guest. At intervals, one after another of his more well-to-do fellow-students would pay his bill. He sometimes, also, was given clothes, which he accepted gladly and without false pride. He had already learned to play in his home town from a pianist stranded there, and while he was a medical student in Vienna he had studied at the Conservatory where he was considered a talented musician of great promise. But here, too, he was neither serious nor diligent enough to develop his art systematically. He soon became entirely content with the impression he made on his acquaintances, or, rather with the pleasure he gave them by his playing. For a while he had a position as pianist in a suburban dancing-school.

Fellow-students and table-companions tried to introduce him into fashionable houses in the same capacity, but on such occasions he would play only what suited him and as long as he chose. His conversations with the young girls present were not always harmless, and he drank more than he could carry. Once, playing for a dance in the house of a wealthy banker, he embarrassed several couples with flattering but improper remarks, and ended up by playing a wild cancan and singing a risqué song with his powerful, bass voice. The host gave him a severe calling down, but Nachtigall, blissfully hilarious, got up and embraced him. The latter was furious and, although himself a Jew, hurled a common insult at him. Nachtigall at once retaliated with a powerful box on his ears, and this definitely concluded his career in the fashionable houses of the city. He behaved better, on the whole, in more intimate circles, although sometimes when the hour was late, he had to be put out of the place by force. But the following morning all was forgiven and forgotten. One day, long after his friends had graduated, he disappeared from the city without a word. For a few months he sent post cards from various Russian and Polish cities, and once Fridolin, who was one of Nachtigall’s favorites, was reminded of his existence not only by a card, but by a request for a moderate sum of money, without explanation. Fridolin sent it at once, but never received a word of thanks or any other sign of life from Nachtigall.

At this moment, however, eight years later, at a quarter to one in the morning, Nachtigall insisted on paying his debt, and took the exact amount in bank-notes from a rather shabby pocket-book. As the latter was fairly well filled, Fridolin accepted the repayment with a good conscience.

“Are you getting along well,” he asked with a smile, in order to make sure.

“I can’t complain,” replied Nachtigall. Placing his hand on Fridolin’s arm, he continued: “But tell me, why are you here so late at night?”

Fridolin explained that he had needed a cup of coffee after visiting a patient, although he didn’t say, without quite knowing why, that he hadn’t found his patient alive. Then he talked in very general terms of his duties at the hospital and his private practice, and mentioned that he was happily married, and the father of a six-year old girl.

Nachtigall in his turn, explained that he had spent the time as a pianist in every possible sort of Polish,

Roumanian, Serbian and Bulgarian city and town, just as Fridolin had surmised. He had a wife and four children living in Lemberg, and he laughed heartily, as though it were unusually jolly to have four children, all of them living in Lemberg, and all by one and the same woman. He had been back in Vienna since the preceding fall. The vaudeville company he had been with had suddenly gone to pieces. He was now playing anywhere and everywhere, anything that happened to come along, sometimes in two or three different houses the same night. For example, down there in that basement — not at all a fashionable place, as he remarked, really a sort of bowling alley, and with very doubtful patrons.... "But if you have to provide for four children and a wife in Lemberg" — he laughed again, though not quite as gaily as before, and added: "But sometimes I am privately engaged." Noticing a reminiscent smile on Fridolin's face, he continued: "Not just in the houses of bankers and such, but in all kinds of circles, even larger ones, both public and secret."

"Secret?" Fridolin asked.

Nachtigall looked straight before him with a gloomy and crafty air, and said: "They will be calling for me again in a minute."

"What, are you playing somewhere else tonight?"

"Yes, they only begin there at two."

"It must be an unusually smart place."

"Yes and no," said Nachtigall, laughing, but he became serious again at once.

"Yes and no?" queried Fridolin, curiously.

Nachtigall bent across the table.

"I'm playing tonight in a private house, but I don't know whose it is."

"Then you're playing there for the first time?" Fridolin asked with increasing interest.

"No, it's the third time, but it will probably be a different house again."

"I don't understand."

"Neither do I," said Nachtigall, laughing, "but you'd better not ask any more."

"Oh, I see," remarked Fridolin.

"No, you're wrong. It's not what you think. I've seen a great deal in my time. It's unbelievable what one sees in such small towns, especially in Roumania, but here..." He drew back the yellow curtain from the window, looked out on the street and said as if to himself: "Not here yet." Then he turned to Fridolin and explained: "I mean the carriage. There's always a carriage to call for me, a different one each time."

"You're making me very curious, Nachtigall," Fridolin assured him.

"Listen to me," said Nachtigall after a slight pause. "I'd like to be able to arrange it — but how can I do it —" Suddenly he burst out: "Have you got plenty of nerve?"

"That's a strange question," said Fridolin in the tone of an offended fraternity student.

"I don't mean that."

"Well, what do you mean? — Why does one need so much courage for this affair? What can possibly happen?" He gave a short and contemptuous laugh.

"Nothing can happen to *me.* At best this would be the last time — but perhaps that may he the case anyhow." He stopped and looked out again through the crevice in the curtain.

"Well, then where's the difficulty?"

"What did you say?" asked Nachtigall, as if coming out of a dream.

"Tell me the rest of the story, now that you've started. A secret party? Closed affair? Nothing but invited guests?"

"I don't know. The last time there were thirty people, and the first time only sixteen."

“A ball?”

“Of course, a ball.” He seemed to be sorry he had spoken of the matter at all.

“And you’re furnishing the music for the occasion?”

“What do you mean — for the occasion? I don’t know for what occasion. I simply play — with bandaged eyes.”

“Nachtigall, what do you mean?” Nachtigall sighed a little and continued: “Unfortunately my eyes are not completely bandaged, so that I can occasionally see something. I can see through the black silk handkerchief over my eyes in the mirror opposite....” And he stopped. “In other words,” said Fridolin impatiently and contemptuously, but feeling strangely excited, “naked females.”

“Don’t say females,” replied Nachtigall in an offended tone, “you never saw such women.”

Fridolin hemmed and hawed a little. “And what’s the price of admission?” he asked casually.

“Do you mean tickets and such? There are none.”

“Well, how does one gain admittance?” asked Fridolin with compressed lips and tapping on the table with his fingers.

“You have to know the password, and it’s a new one each time.”

“And what’s the one for tonight?”

“I don’t know yet. I’ll only find out from the coachman.”

“Take me along, Nachtigall.”

“Impossible. It’s too dangerous.”

“But a minute ago you yourself spoke... of being willing to... I think you can manage all right.”

Nachtigall looked at him critically and said: “It would be absolutely impossible in your street clothes, for everyone is masked, men and women. As you haven’t a masquerade outfit with you, it’s out of the question. Perhaps the next time. I’ll try to figure out some way.” He listened attentively, peered again through the opening in the curtain and said with a sigh of relief: “There’s my carriage, good-bye.”

Fridolin hung on to his arm and said: “You can’t get away that way. You’ve got to take me along.”

“But my dear man...”

“Leave it to me. I know that it’s dangerous. Perhaps that’s the very thing that tempts me.”

“But I’ve already told you — without costume and mask—”

“There are places to rent costumes.”

“At one o’clock in the morning?”

“Listen here, Nachtigall. There’s just such a place at the corner of Wickenburg Strasse. I walk past it several times a day.” And he added, with growing excitement:

“You stay here for another quarter of an hour, Nachtigall. In the meantime I’ll see what luck I have. The proprietor of the costume shop probably lives in the same building. If he doesn’t — well, then I’ll simply give it up for tonight. Let fate decide the question. There’s a café in the same building. I think it’s called Café Vindobona. You tell the coachman that you’ve forgotten something in the café, walk in, and I’ll he waiting near the door. Then you can give me the password and get back into your carriage. If I manage to get a costume I’ll take a cab and immediately follow you. The rest will take care of itself. I give you my word of honor, Nachtigall, that if you run any risk, I’ll assume complete responsibility.”

Nachtigall had tried several times to interrupt Fridolin, but it was useless —

The former threw some money on the table to pay his bill, including a generous tip which seemed appropriate for the style of the night, and left. A closed carriage was standing outside. A coachman dressed entirely in black with a tall silk hat, sat on the box, motionless. It looks like a mourning-coach, Fridolin

thought. He ran down the street and reached the corner-house he was looking for a few minutes later. He rang the bell, inquired from the care-taker whether the costumer Gibiser lived in the house, and hoped in the bottom of his heart that he would receive a negative answer. But Gibiser actually lived there, on the floor below that of the costume shop. The care-taker did not seem especially surprised at having such a late caller. Made affable by Fridolin's liberal tip, he stated that it was not unusual during the carnival for people to come at such a late hour to hire costumes. He lighted the way from below with a candle until Fridolin had rung the bell on the second floor. Herr Gibiser himself opened the door for him, as if he had been waiting there. He was a bald-headed, haggard man and wore an old-fashioned, flowered dressing-gown and a tasselled, Turkish cap which made him look like a foolish old man on the stage. Fridolin asked for a costume and said that the price did not matter, whereupon Herr Gibiser remarked, almost disdainfully: "I ask a fair price, no more." He led the way up a winding staircase into the store. There was an odor of silk, velvet, perfume, dust and withered flowers, and a glitter of silver and red out of the indistinct darkness. A number of little electric bulbs suddenly shone between the open cabinets of a long, narrow passage, the end of which was enveloped in darkness. There were all kinds of costumes hanging to the right and to the left. On one side knights, squires, peasants, hunters, scholars, Orientals and clowns; on the other, ladies-at-court, baronesses, peasant women, lady's maids, queens of the night. The corresponding head-dresses were on a shelf above the costumes. Fridolin felt as though he were walking through a gallery of hanged people who were on the point of asking each other to dance. Herr Gibiser followed him. Finally he asked: "Is there anything special you want? Louis Quatorze, Directoire, or Old-German?"

"I need a dark cassock and a black mask, that's all."

At this moment the clink of glasses rang out from the end of the passage. Fridolin was startled and looked at the costumer, as though he felt an explanation were due. Gibiser, however, merely groped for a switch which was concealed somewhere. A blinding light was diffused over the entire passage down to the end where a little table, covered with plates, glasses and bottles, could be seen. Two men, dressed in the red robes of vehmic judges, sprang up from two chairs beside the table and a graceful little girl disappeared at the same moment. Gibiser rushed forward with long strides, reached across the table and grabbed a white wig in his hand. Simultaneously a young and charming girl, still almost a child, wearing a Pierrette costume, wriggled out from under the table and ran along the passage to Fridolin who caught her in his arms. Gibiser dropped the white wig and grabbed the two vehmic judges by their robes. At the same time he called out to Fridolin: "Hold on to that girl for me." The child pressed against Fridolin as though sure of protection. Her little oval face was covered with powder and several beauty spots, and a fragrance of roses and powder arose from her delicate breasts. There was a smile of impish desire in her eyes.

"Gentlemen," cried Gibiser, "you will stay here while I call the police."

"What's got into you?" they exclaimed, and continued as if with one voice: "We were invited by the young lady."

Gibiser released his hold and Fridolin heard him saying: "You will have to explain this. Couldn't you see that the girl was deranged? Then turning to Fridolin, he said: "Sorry to keep you waiting."

"Oh, it doesn't matter," said Fridolin.

He would have liked to stay, or, better still, to take the girl with him, no matter where — and whatever the consequences. She looked up at him with alluring and childlike eyes, as if spellbound. The men at the end of the passage were arguing excitedly. Gibiser turned to Fridolin and asked in a matter-of-fact way: "You wanted a cassock, a pilgrim's hat and a mask?"

"No," said Pierrette with gleaming eyes, "you must give this gentleman a cloak lined with ermine and a

doublet of red silk."

"Don't you budge from my side," answered Gibiser. Then he pointed to a dark frock hanging between a medieval soldier and a Venetian Senator, and said: "That's about your size and here's the hat. Take it quick."

The two strange men protested again: "You'll have to let us out at once, Herr Chibisier." Fridolin noticed with surprise the French pronunciation of the name Gibiser.

"That's out of the question," replied the costumer scornfully. "You'll kindly wait here until I return."

Meanwhile Fridolin slipped into the cassock and tied the white cords. Gibiser, who was standing on a narrow ladder, handed him the black, broad-rimmed pilgrim's hat, and he put it on. But he did all this unwillingly, being more and more convinced that danger was threatening Pierrette and that it was his duty to remain and help her. The mask which Gibiser gave him and which he at once tried on, smelt strange and rather disagreeable.

"You walk down ahead of me," Gibiser commanded the girl, pointing to the stairs. Pierrette turned and waved a gay, yet wistful farewell. Fridolin's eyes followed the direction of her gaze. The two men were no longer in costume but wore evening clothes and white ties, though their faces were still covered by their red masks. Pierrette went down the winding staircase with a light step, Gibiser behind her and Fridolin following in the rear. In the anteroom below Gibiser opened a door leading to the inner rooms and said to Pierrette: "Go to bed at once, you depraved creature. I'll talk to you as soon as I've settled with those two upstairs."

She stood in the doorway, white and delicate, and with a glance at Fridolin, sadly shook her head. He noticed with surprise, in a large wall-mirror to the right, a haggard pilgrim who seemed to be himself. At the same time he knew very well that it could be no other.

The girl disappeared and the old costumer locked the door behind her. Then he opened the entrance door and hurried Fridolin out into the hallway.

"Well," said Fridolin, "how much do I owe you?"

"Never mind, sir, you can pay when you return the things. I'll trust you."

Fridolin, however, refused to move. "Swear that you won't hurt that poor child," he said.

"What business is it of yours?"

"I heard you, a minute ago, say that the girl was insane — and just now you called her a depraved creature. That sounds pretty contradictory."

"Well," replied Gibiser theatrically, "aren't insanity and depravity the same in the eyes of God?"

Fridolin shuddered with disgust. "Whatever it is," he remarked, "there are ways and means of attending to it. I am a doctor. We'll have another talk about this tomorrow."

Gibiser laughed mockingly without uttering a sound. A light flared up in the hallway, and the door between them was closed and immediately bolted. Fridolin took off the hat, cassock and mask while going downstairs, carrying the bundle under his arm. The care-taker opened the outer door and Fridolin saw the mourning-coach standing opposite with the motionless driver on the box. Nachtigall was just on the point of leaving the café, and seemed somewhat taken aback at seeing Fridolin at hand so promptly.

"Then you did manage to get a costume?"

"You can see for yourself. What's the password?"

"You insist on knowing it?"

"Absolutely."

"Well then — it's Denmark."

"Are you mad, Nachtigall?"

"Why mad?"

"Oh, never mind — I was at the seashore in Denmark this summer. Get back into your carriage — but not too fast, so that I'll have time to take a cab over on the other side."

Nachtigall nodded and leisurely lighted a cigarette. Fridolin quickly crossed the street, hailed a cab in an offhand way, as though he were playing a joke, and told the driver to follow the mourning-coach which was just starting in front of them.

They crossed Alser Strasse, and drove on through dim, deserted side-streets under a railroad viaduct toward the suburbs.

Fridolin was afraid that the driver might lose sight of the carriage, but whenever he put his head out of the open window, into the abnormally warm air, he always saw it. It was a moderate distance ahead of them, and the coachman with his high, black silk hat sat motionless on the box. This business may end badly, thought Fridolin. At the same time he remembered the fragrance of roses and powder that had arisen from Pierrette's breasts. What strange story is behind all that? he wondered. I shouldn't have left — perhaps it was even a great mistake — I wonder where I am now.

The road wound slowly up-hill between modest villas. Fridolin thought that he now had his bearings. He had sometimes come this way on walks, years ago. It must be the *Galitzinberg* that he was going up. Down to his left he could see the city indistinct in the mist, but glimmering with a thousand lights. He heard the rumbling of wheels behind him and looked out of the window back of him. There were two carriages following his. He was glad of that, for now the driver of the mourning-coach would certainly not be suspicious of him.

With a violent jolt, the cab turned into a side street and went down into something like a ravine, between iron fences, stone walls and terraces. Fridolin realized that it was high time to put on his costume. He took off his fur coat and slipped into the cassock, just as he slipped into the sleeves of his white linen coat every morning in his ward at the hospital. He was relieved to think that, if everything went well, it would be only a few hours before he would be back again by the beds of his patients, ready to give aid.

His cab stopped. What if I don't get out at all, Fridolin thought, and go back at once? But go where? To little Pierrette? To the girl in Buchfeld Strasse? Or to Marianne, the daughter of the deceased? Or perhaps home? He shuddered slightly and decided he'd rather go anywhere than home. Was it because it was farthest to go? No, I can't turn back, he thought. I must go through with this, even if it means death. And he laughed at himself, using such a big word but without feeling very cheerful about it.

A garden gate stood wide open. The mourning-coach drove on deeper into the ravine, or into the darkness that seemed like one. Nachtigall must, therefore, have got out. Fridolin quickly sprang out of the cab and told the driver to wait for him up at the turn, no matter how late he might be. To make sure of him, he paid him well in advance and promised him a large sum for the return trip. The other carriages drove up and Fridolin saw the veiled figure of a woman step out of the first. Then he turned into the garden and put on his mask. A narrow path, lighted up by a lamp from the house, led to the entrance. Doors opened before him, and he found himself in a narrow, white vestibule. He could hear an organ playing, and two servants in dark livery, their faces covered by gray masks, stood on each side of him.

Two voices whispered in unison: "Password?" He replied: "Denmark." One of them took his fur coat and disappeared with it into an adjoining room, while the other opened a door. Fridolin entered a dimly lighted room with high ceilings, hung on all sides with black silk. Sixteen to twenty people masked and dressed as monks and nuns were walking up and down. The gently swelling strains of Italian church music came from above. A small group, composed of three nuns and two monks, stood in a corner of the room. They watched him for a second, but turned away again at once, almost deliberately. Fridolin, noticing that he was the only

one who wore a hat, took his off and walked up and down as nonchalantly as possible. A monk brushed against him and nodded a greeting, but from behind the mask Fridolin encountered a searching and penetrating glance. A strange, heavy perfume, as of Southern gardens, scented the room. Again an arm brushed against him, but this time it was that of a nun. Like all the others she had a black veil over her face, head and neck, a blood-red mouth glowed under the black laces of the mask. Where am I? thought Fridolin. Among lunatics? Or conspirators? Is this a meeting of some religious sect? Can it be that Nachtigall was ordered or paid to bring along some stranger to be the target of their jokes? But everything seemed too serious, too intense, too uncanny for a masquerade prank. A woman's voice joined the strains of the organ and an Old-Italian sacred aria resounded through the room. They all stood still and listened and Fridolin surrendered himself for a moment to the wondrously swelling melody. A soft voice suddenly whispered from behind: "Don't turn around. There's still a chance for you to get away. You don't belong here. If it's discovered it will go hard with you."

Fridolin gave a frightened start. For a second he thought of leaving, but his curiosity, the allurement and, above all, his pride, were stronger than any of his misgivings. Now that I've gone this far, he thought, I don't care what happens. And he shook his head negatively without turning around.

The voice behind him whispered: "I should feel very sorry for you." He turned and looked at her. He saw the blood-red mouth glimmering under the lace. Dark eyes were fixed on him. "I shall stay," he said in a heroic voice which he hardly recognized as his own, and he looked away again. The song was now ringing through the room; the organ had a new sound which was anything but sacred. It was worldly, voluptuous, and pealing. Looking around Fridolin saw that all the nuns had disappeared and that only the monks were left. The voice had meanwhile also changed. It rose by way of an artistically executed trill from its low and serious pitch to a high and jubilant tone. In place of the organ a piano had suddenly chimed in with its worldly and brazen tunes. Fridolin at once recognized Nachtigall's wild and inflammatory touch. The woman's voice which had been so reverent a moment before had vanished with a last wild, voluptuous outburst through the ceiling, as it were, into infinity. Doors opened to the right and left. On one side Fridolin recognized the indistinct outlines of Nachtigall's figure; the room opposite was radiant with a blaze of light. All the women were standing there motionless. They wore dark veils over their heads, faces and necks and black masks over their eyes, but otherwise they were completely naked. Fridolin's eyes wandered eagerly from voluptuous to slender bodies, from delicate figures to those luxuriously developed. He realized that each of these women would forever be a mystery, and that the enigma of their, large eyes peering at him from beneath the black masks would remain unsolved. The delight of beholding was changed to an almost unbearable agony of desire. And the others seemed to experience a similar sensation. The first gasps of rapture had changed to sighs that held a note very near anguish. A cry broke out somewhere. Suddenly all of them, as though pursued, rushed from the darkened room to the women, who received them with wild and wicked laughter. The men were no longer in cassocks, but dressed as cavaliers, in white, yellow, blue and red. Fridolin was the only one in monk's dress. Somewhat nervously he slunk into the farthest corner, where he was near Nachtigall whose back was turned to him. Nachtigall had a bandage over his eyes, but Fridolin thought he could see him peering underneath the bandage into the tall mirror opposite. In it the cavaliers with their gay-colored costumes were reflected, dancing with their naked partners.

A woman came up suddenly behind Fridolin and whispered — for no one spoke aloud, as if the voices, too, were to remain a secret —: "What is the matter? Why don't you dance?"

Fridolin, seeing two noblemen watch fixedly from another corner, suspected that this woman with the boyish and slender figure, was sent to put him to the test. In spite of it he meant to dance with her, but at that

moment another woman left her partner and walked quickly up to him. He knew at once that it was the same one who had already warned him. She pretended that she had just seen him and whispered, in a voice loud enough to be heard in the other corner: “Returned at last!” Laughingly, she continued: “All your efforts are useless. I know you.” Then turning to the woman with the boyish figure, she said: “Let me have him for just two minutes, then he shall be yours again until morning, if you wish.” In a softer voice she added: “It is really he.” The other replied in astonishment: “Really?”- and with a light step went to join the cavaliers in the corner.

Alone with Fridolin, the woman cautioned him, “Don’t ask questions, and don’t be surprised at anything. I tried to lead them astray, but you can’t continue to deceive them for long. Go, before it is too late — and it may be too late at almost any moment — and be careful that no one follows you. No one must know who you are. There would be no more peace and quiet for you. Go!”

“Will I see you again?”

“It’s impossible.”

“Then I shall stay.”

“My life, at most, is at stake,” he said, “and I’m ready at this moment to give it for you.” He took her hands and tried to draw her to him.

She whispered again, almost despairingly: “Go!”

He laughed, and he heard himself laughing as in a dream. “But I know what I’m doing. You are not all here just to make us mad by looking at you. You are doing this to unnerve me still more.”

“It will soon be too late. You must go!”

But he wouldn’t listen to her. “Do you mean to say that there are no rooms here for the convenience of congenial couples? Will all these people leave with just a courteous ‘good-bye’? They don’t look like it.”

He pointed to the dancers, glowing white bodies closely pressed against the blue, red and yellow silk of their partners, circling, in the brilliant, mirrored room adjoining, to the wild tunes of the piano. It seemed to him that no longer was any attention paid to him and the woman beside him. They stood alone in the semi-dark middle room.

“You are hoping in vain,” she whispered. “There are no such rooms here. This is your last opportunity to leave.”

“Come with me!”

She shook her head violently, despairingly.

He laughed again, ‘not recognizing his laughter. “You’re making game of me. Did all these men and women come here merely to fan the flames of their desire and then depart? Who can forbid you to come away with me if you choose?”

She took a deep breath and drooped her head.

“Oh, now I understand,” he said. “That’s the punishment you impose on those who come here uninvited. You couldn’t have invented a more cruel one. Please let me off and forgive me. Impose some other penalty, anything but that I must leave you.”

“You are mad. I can’t go with you, let alone anyone else. Whomever I went with would forfeit his life and mine.”

Fridolin felt intoxicated, not only with her, her fragrant body and her red-glowing mouth — not only with the atmosphere of this room and the voluptuous mysteries that surrounded him — he was intoxicated, his thirst unsatisfied, with all the experiences of the night, none of which had come to a satisfactory conclusion. He was intoxicated with himself, with his boldness, the change he felt in himself, and he touched the veil

which was wound about her head, as though he intended to remove it.

She seized his hands. “One night during the dance here one of the men took it into his head to tear the veil from one of us. They ripped the mask from his face and drove him out with whips.”

“And — she?”

“Did you read of a beautiful young girl, only a few weeks ago, who took poison the day before her wedding?”

He remembered the incident, even the name, and mentioned it. “Wasn’t it a girl of the nobility who was engaged to marry an Italian Prince?”

She nodded.

One of the cavaliers, the most distinguished looking of them all and the only one dressed in white, suddenly stopped before them. With a slight bow, courteous but imperative, he asked the woman with whom Fridolin was talking to dance with him. She seemed to hesitate a moment, but he put his arm around her waist and they drifted away to join the other couples in the adjoining room.

A sudden feeling of solitude made Fridolin shiver as if with cold. He looked about him. Nobody seemed to be paying any attention to him. This was perhaps his last chance to leave with impunity. He didn’t know, however, why it was that he remained spell-bound in his corner where he now felt sure that he was not observed. It might be his aversion to an inglorious and perhaps ridiculous retreat, or the excruciating ungratified desire for the beautiful woman whose fragrance was still in his nostrils. Or he may have stayed because he vaguely hoped that all that had happened so far was intended as a test of his courage and that this magnificent woman would be his reward. It was clear at any rate that the strain was too great to be endured, and that, no matter what the danger, he would have to end it. It could hardly cost him his life, no matter what he decided. He might be among fools, or libertines, but certainly not among rascals or criminals. The thought occurred to him to acknowledge himself as an intruder and to place himself at their disposal in chivalrous fashion. This night could only conclude in such a manner, — with a harmonious finale, as it were — if it were to mean more than a wild, shadow-like succession of gloomy and lascivious adventures, all without an end. So, taking a deep breath, he prepared to carry out his plan.

At this moment, however, a voice whispered beside him: “Password!” A cavalier in black had stepped up to him unseen. As Fridolin didn’t reply, he repeated his question. “Denmark,” said Fridolin.

“That’s right, sir, that’s the password for admittance, but what’s the password of the house, may I ask?”

Fridolin was silent.

“Won’t you be kind’ enough to tell me the password of the house?” It sounded like a sharp threat.

Fridolin shrugged his shoulders. The other walked to the middle of the room and raised his hand. The piano ceased playing and the dance stopped. Two other cavaliers, one in yellow, the other in red, stepped up. “The password, sir,” they said simultaneously.

“I have forgotten it,” replied Fridolin with a vacant smile but feeling quite calm.

“That’s unfortunate,” said the gentleman in yellow, “for here it doesn’t matter whether you have forgotten it or if you never knew it.”

The other men flocked in and the doors on both sides were closed. Fridolin stood alone in the garb of a monk in the midst of the gay-colored cavaliers.

“Take off your mask!” several of them demanded. Fridolin held out his arm to protect himself. It seemed a thousand times worse to be the only one unmasked amongst so many that were, than to stand suddenly naked amongst people who were dressed. He replied firmly: “If my appearance here has offended any of the gentlemen present, I am ready to give satisfaction in the usual manner, but I shall take off my mask only if all

of you will do the same."

"It's not a question of satisfaction," said the cavalier in red, who until now had not spoken, "but one of expiation."

"Take off your mask!" commanded another in a high-pitched, insolent voice which reminded Fridolin of an officer giving orders, "and we'll tell you to your face what's in store for you."

"I shall not take it off," said Fridolin in an even sharper tone, "and woe to him who dares to touch me."

A hand suddenly reached out, as if to tear off the mask, when a door suddenly opened and one of the women — Fridolin did not doubt which one it was — stood there, dressed as a nun, as he had first seen her. The others could be seen behind her in the brilliantly lighted room, naked, with veiled faces, crowding together in a terrified group. The door at once closed again.

"Leave him alone," said the nun. "I am ready to redeem him."

There was a short, deep silence, as though something monstrous had happened. The cavalier in black who had first demanded the password from Fridolin turned to the nun, saying: "You know what you are taking upon yourself in doing this."

"I know."

There was a general sigh of relief from those present.

"You are free," said the cavalier to Fridolin. "Leave this house at once and be careful not to inquire further into what you have seen here. If you attempt to put anyone on our trail, whether you succeed or not — you will be doomed."

Fridolin stood motionless. "How is this woman — to redeem me?" he asked.

There was no answer. Hands pointed to the door indicated that he must go.

Fridolin shook his head. "Impose what punishment you wish, gentlemen, I won't let this woman pay for me."

"You would be unable, in any case, to change her lot," the cavalier in black said very gently. "When a promise has been made here there is no turning back."

The nun slowly nodded, as if to confirm the statement. "Go!" she said to Fridolin.

"No," replied the latter, elevating his voice. "Life means nothing to me if I must leave here without you. I shall not ask who you are or where you come from. What difference can it make to you, gentlemen, whether or not you keep up this carnival comedy, though it may aim at a serious conclusion. Whoever you may be, you surely lead other lives. I won't play a part, here or elsewhere, and if I have been forced to do so up to now, I shall give it up. I feel that a fate has overtaken me which has nothing to do with this foolery. I will tell you my name, take off my mask and be responsible for the consequences."

"Don't do it," exclaimed the nun, "you would only ruin yourself without saving me. Go!" Then she turned to the others, saying: "Here I am, take me — all of you!" The dark costume dropped from her, as if by magic. She stood there in the radiance of her white body; reached for the veil which was wrapped about her head, face and neck and unwound it with a wonderful circular motion. It sank to the floor, dark hair fell in great profusion over her shoulders, breasts and hips — but before Fridolin could even glance at her face, he was seized by irresistible arms, and pushed to the door. A moment later he found himself in the anteroom, the door closed behind him. A masked servant brought him his fur coat and helped him put it on. The main door opened automatically, and as if driven by some invisible force, he hurried out. As he stood on the street the light behind disappeared. The house stood there in silence with closed windows from which not a glimmer issued. I must remember everything clearly, was his main thought; I must find the house again — the rest will follow as a matter of course.

Darkness surrounded him. The dull reddish glow of a street lamp was visible a slight distance above where the cab was to wait for him. The mourning-coach drove up from the street below, as though he had called it. A servant opened the door.

"I have my own cab," said Fridolin. When the servant shook his head, Fridolin continued: "If it has already gone, I'll walk back to the city."

The man replied with a wave of his hand which was anything but servant-like, so that objection was out of the question. The ridiculously high silk hat of the coachman towered up into the night. The wind was blowing a gale; violet clouds raced across the sky. Fridolin felt that, after his previous experience, there was nothing for him to do but to get into the carriage. It started the moment he was inside.

He resolved, as soon as possible, to clear up the mystery of his adventure, no matter how dangerous it might be. His life, it seemed, would not have the slightest meaning any more, if he did not succeed in finding the incomprehensible woman who at this very moment was paying for his safety. It was only too easy to guess the price. But why should she sacrifice herself for him? To sacrifice —? Was she the kind of woman to whom the things that were facing her, that she was now submitting to, could mean a sacrifice? If she attended these affairs — and since she seemed to understand the rules so well it could not be her first time — what difference could it make to her if she belonged to one of the cavaliers, or to all? Indeed, could she possibly be anything but a woman of easy virtue? Were any of them anything else? That's what they were, without a doubt, even if all of them led another, more normal life, so to speak, besides this one of promiscuity. Perhaps everything he had just gone through had been only an outrageous joke. A joke planned, prepared and even rehearsed for such an occasion when some bold outsider should be caught intruding?

And yet, as he thought of the woman who had warned him from the very beginning, who was now ready to pay for him — he remembered something in her voice, her bearing, in the royal nobility of her nude body which could not possibly have been false. Or was it possible that only his sudden appearance had caused her to change? After everything that had happened, such a supposition did not seem impossible. There was no conceit in this idea. There may be hours or nights, he thought, in which some strange, irresistible charm emanates from men who under normal circumstances have no special power over the other sex.

The carriage continued up-hill. If all were well, he should have turned into the main street long ago. What were they going to do with him? Where was the carriage taking him? Was the comedy to be continued elsewhere? And what would the continuation be? A solution of the mystery and a happy reunion at some other place. Would he be rewarded for passing the test so creditably and made a member of the secret society? Was he to have unchallenged possession of the lovely nun? The windows of the carriage were closed and Fridolin tried to look out — but they were opaque. He attempted to open them, first on one side, then on the other, but it was impossible. The glass partition between him and the coachman's box was just as thick and just as firmly closed. He knocked on the glass, he called, he shouted, but the carriage went on. He tried to open both the doors, but they wouldn't budge. His renewed calling was drowned by the rattling of the wheels and the roaring of the wind. The carriage began to jolt, going down-hill, faster and faster. Fridolin, uneasy and alarmed, was on the point of smashing one of the blind windows, when the carriage suddenly stopped. Both doors opened together, as if by some mechanism, and as though Fridolin had been ironically given the choice between one side or the other. He jumped out, the doors closed with a bang — and without the coachman paying the slightest attention to him, the carriage drove away across the open field into the darkness of the night.

The sky was overcast, clouds raced across it, and the wind whistled. Fridolin stood in the snow which shed a faint light round about. He was alone, his open fur coat over his monk's costume, the pilgrim's hat on his

head; and an uncanny feeling overcame him. The main street was a slight distance away, where a row of dimly-flickering street lamps indicated the direction of the city. However, he ran straight down across the sloping, snow-covered field, which shortened the way, so as to get among people as quickly as possible. His feet soaked, he came into a narrow, almost unlighted street, and at first walked along between high board fences which groaned in the wind. Turning the next corner, he reached a somewhat wider street, where scattered little houses alternated with empty building lots. Somewhere a tower clock struck three.

Someone was coming towards him. The person wore a short jacket, he had his hands in his trouser pockets, his head was down between his shoulders, and his hat was pulled over his forehead. Fridolin got ready for an attack, but the tramp unexpectedly turned and ran. What does that mean? he asked himself. Then he decided that he must present a very uncanny appearance, took off the pilgrim's hat and buttoned his coat, underneath which the monk's gown was flapping around his ankles. Again he turned a corner into a suburban main street. A man in peasant's dress walked past and spoke to him, thinking him a priest. The light of a street lamp fell upon a sign on a corner house. *Liebhartstal* — then he wasn't very far from the house which he had left less than an hour before. For a second he felt tempted to retrace his steps and to wait in the vicinity for further developments. But he gave up the idea when he realized that he would only expose himself to grave danger without solving the mystery. As he imagined what was probably taking place in the villa at this very moment he was filled with wrath, despair, shame and fear. This state of mind was so unbearable that it almost made him sorry the tramp had not attacked him; in fact, he almost regretted that he wasn't lying against the fence in the deserted street with a knife-gash in his side. That, at least, might have given some significance to this senseless night with its childish adventures, all of which had been so ruthlessly cut short. It seemed positively ridiculous to return home, as he now intended doing. But nothing was lost as yet. There was another day ahead, and he swore that he would not rest until he had found again the beautiful woman whose dazzling nakedness had so intoxicated him. It was only now that he thought of Albertina, but with a feeling that she, too, would first have to be won. He could not, must not, be reunited with her until he had deceived her with all the other women of the night. With the naked woman, with Pierrette, with Marianne, with Mizzi in the narrow street. And shouldn't he also try to find the insolent student who had bumped into him, so that he might challenge him to a duel with sabres or, better still, with pistols? What did someone else's life, what did his own, matter to him? Is one always to stake one's life just from a sense of duty or self-sacrifice, and never because of a whim or a passion, or simply to match oneself against Fate?

Again the thought came to him that even now the germ of a fatal disease might be in his body. Wouldn't it be silly to die just because a child with diphtheria had coughed in his face? Perhaps he was already ill. Wasn't he feverish? Perhaps at this moment he was lying at home in bed — and everything he thought he had experienced was merely delirium?

Fridolin opened his eyes as wide as possible, passed his hand over his forehead and cheeks and felt his pulse. It scarcely beat faster. Everything was all right. He was completely awake.

He continued along the street, towards the city. A few market-wagons rumbled by, and now and then he met poorly dressed people whose day was just beginning. Behind the window of a coffee-house, at a table over which a gas-flame flickered, sat a fat man with a scarf around his neck, his head on his hands, fast asleep. The houses were still enveloped in darkness, though here and there a few windows were lighted and Fridolin thought he could feel the people gradually awaking. It seemed that he could see them stretching themselves in their beds and preparing for their pitiful and strenuous day. A new day faced him, too, but for him it wasn't pitiful and dull. And with a strange, happy beating of his heart, he realized that in a few hours he would be walking around between the beds of his patients in his white hospital coat. A one-horse cab stood

at the next corner, the coachman asleep on the box. Fridolin awakened him, gave his address and got in.

5

IT WAS FOUR o'clock in the morning when Fridolin walked up the steps of his home. Before doing anything else he went into his office and carefully locked the masquerade costume in a closet. As he wished not to wake Albertina, he took off his shoes and clothes before going into the bedroom, and very cautiously turned on the light on the little table beside his bed. Albertina was lying there quietly, with her arms folded under her head. Her lips were half-open, and painful shadows surrounded them. It was a face that Fridolin did not know. He bent down over her, and at once her forehead became lined with furrows, as though someone had touched it, and her features seemed strangely distorted. Suddenly, still in her sleep, she laughed so shrilly that he became frightened. Involuntarily he called her name. She laughed again, as if in answer, in a strange, almost uncanny manner. Fridolin called her in a louder voice, and she opened her eyes, slowly and with difficulty. She stared at him, as though she did not recognize him.

"Albertina!" he cried for the third time. As she gained consciousness, an expression of fear, even of terror came into her eyes. Half awake, and seemingly in despair, she raised her arms.

"What's the matter?" asked Fridolin with bated breath. As she still stared at him, terrified, he added, to reassure her: "It is I, Albertina." She breathed deeply, tried to smile, dropped her arms on the bed cover and said, in a far away voice: "Is it morning yet?"

"It will be very soon," replied Fridolin, "it's past four o'clock. I've just come home." She was silent and he continued: "The Councilor is dead. He was dying when I arrived, and naturally I couldn't — leave immediately."

She nodded, but hardly seemed to have heard or understood him. She stared into space, as though she could see through him. He felt that she must know of his recent experiences — and at the same time the idea seemed ridiculous. He bent down and touched her forehead. She shuddered slightly.

"What's the matter?" he asked again.

She shook her head slowly and he passed his hand gently over her hair. "Albertina, what's the matter?"

"I've been dreaming," she said distantly.

"What have you been dreaming?" he asked mildly.

"Oh, so much, I can't quite remember."

"Perhaps if you try?"

"It was all so confused — and I'm tired. You must be tired, too."

"Not in the least. I don't think I shall go to bed at all. You know, when I come home so late — it would really be best to sit right down to my desk — it's just in such morning hours—" He interrupted himself. "Wouldn't it be better if you told me your dream?" He smiled a little unnaturally.

She replied: "You really ought to lie down and take a little rest."

He hesitated a moment, then he did as she suggested and stretched himself beside her, though he was careful not to touch her. There shall be a sword between us, he thought, remembering a remark he had once made, half joking, on a similar occasion. They lay there silently with open eyes, and they felt both their proximity and the distance that separated them. After a while he raised his head on his arm and looked at her for a long time, as though he could see much more than just the outlines of her face.

"Your dream!" he hinted, once more. She must just have been waiting for him to speak. She held out her hand to him, he took it and, more absent-mindedly than tenderly, clasped his hand about her slender fingers,

as he had often done before. She began: “Do you still remember the room in the little villa on Lake Wörther, where I lived with Mother and Father the summer we became engaged?”

He nodded.

“Well, it was there the dream began. I was entering this house, like an actress stepping onto the stage — I don’t know where I came from. My parents seemed to have gone on a journey and left me alone. That surprised me, for our wedding was the next day. But my wedding-dress hadn’t yet arrived. I thought I might be mistaken, and I opened the wardrobe to look. Instead of the wedding dress a great many other clothes, like fancy dress costumes, were hanging there, opera-like, gorgeous, Oriental. Which shall I wear for the wedding? I thought. Then the wardrobe was suddenly closed again, or it disappeared, I don’t remember. The room was brightly lighted, but outside the window it was pitch black... Suddenly you were standing out there. Galley slaves had rowed you to the house. I had just seen them disappearing in the darkness. You were dressed in marvellous gold and silver clothes, and had a dagger in a silver sheath hanging by your side. You lifted me down from the window. I, too, was gorgeously dressed, like a princess. We stood outside in the twilight, and a fine gray mist reached up to our ankles. The country-side was perfectly familiar to us: there was the lake, the mountain rose above us, and I could even see the villas which stood there like little toy houses. We were floating, no, flying, along above the mist, and I thought: so this is our honeymoon trip. Soon, however, we stopped flying and were walking along a forest path, the one leading to Elizabeth Heights. Suddenly, we came into a sort of clearing in the mountains enclosed on three sides by the forest, while a steep wall of rock towered up in the back. The sky was blue and starry, with an expanse far greater than it ever has in reality; it was the ceiling of our bridal-chamber. You took me into your arms and loved me very much.”

“I hope you loved me, too,” remarked Fridolin with an invisible, malicious smile.

“Even more than you did me,” replied Albertina seriously, “but, how can I explain it — in spite of the intensity of our happiness our love was also sad, as if filled with some presentiment of sorrow. Suddenly, it was morning. The meadow was light and covered with flowers, the forest glistened with dew, and over the rocky wall the sun sent down quivering rays of light. It was now time to return to the world and go among people. But something terrible happened: our clothes were gone. I was seized with unheard of terror and a shame so burning that it almost consumed me. At the same time I was angry with you, as though you were to blame for the misfortune. This sensation of terror, shame and anger was much more intense than anything I had ever felt when awake. Conscious of your guilt, you rushed away naked, to go and get clothes for us. When you had gone I was very gay. I neither felt sorry for you, nor worried about you. Delighted to be alone, I ran happily about in the meadow singing a tune we had heard at some dance. My voice had a wonderful ring and I wished that they could hear me down in the city, which I couldn’t see but which nevertheless existed. It was far below me and was surrounded by a high wall, a very fantastic city which I can’t describe. It was not Oriental and not exactly Old-German, and yet it seemed to be first one, and then the other. At any rate, it was a city buried a long time ago and forever. Suddenly I was lying in the meadow, stretched out in the sunlight — far more beautiful than I ever was in reality, and while I lay there, a young man wearing a light-colored fashionable suit of clothes walked out of the woods. I now realize that he looked like the Dane whom I mentioned yesterday. He walked up and spoke to me courteously as he passed, but otherwise paid no particular attention to me. He went straight to the wall of rock and looked it over carefully, as though considering how to master it. At the same time I could see you hurrying from house to house, from shop to shop in the buried city, now walking underneath arbors, then passing through a sort of Turkish bazaar. You were buying the most beautiful things you could find for me: clothes, linen, shoes, and jewellery. And then you put these things into a little hand-bag of yellow leather that held them all. You were being followed by a

crowd of people whom I could not see, but I heard the sound of their threatening shouts. The Dane, who had stopped before the wall of rock a little while before, now reappeared from the woods — and apparently in the meantime he had encircled the whole globe. He looked different, but he was the same, nevertheless. He stopped before the wall of rock, vanished and came out of the woods again, appearing and disappearing two, or three, or a hundred times. It was always the same man and yet always different. He spoke to me every time he passed, and finally stopped in front of me and looked at me searchingly. I laughed seductively as I have never laughed in my life, and he held out his arms to me. I wished to escape but it was useless — and he sank down beside me on the meadow."

She was silent. Fridolin's throat was parched. In the darkness of the room he could see she had concealed her face in her hands.

"A strange dream," he said, "but surely that isn't the end?" When she said "no," he asked: "Then why don't you continue?"

"It's not easy," she began again. "Such things are difficult to express in words. Well, to go on — I seemed to live through countless days and nights; there was neither time nor space. I was no longer in the clearing, enclosed by the woods and rock. I was on a flower-covered plain, that stretched into infinite distance and, finally, into the horizon in all directions. And for a long time I had not been alone with this one man on the meadow. Whether there were three, or ten, or a thousand other couples I don't know. Whether I noticed them or not, whether I was united only with that particular man or also with others, I can't say. Just as that earlier feeling of terror and shame went beyond anything I have ever felt in the waking state, so nothing in our conscious existence can be compared with the feeling of release, of freedom, of happiness, which I now experienced. Yet I didn't for one moment forget you. In fact, I saw that you had been seized — by soldiers, I think — and there were also priests among them. Somebody, a gigantic person, tied your hands, and I knew that you were to be executed. I knew it, without feeling any sympathy for you, and without shuddering. I felt it, but as though I were far removed from you. They led you into a yard, a sort of castle-yard, and you stood there, naked, with your hands tied behind your back. Just as I saw you, though I was far away, you could also see me and the man who was holding me in his arms. All the other couples, too, were visible in this infinite sea of nakedness which foamed about me, and of which my companion and I were only a wave, so to speak. Then, while you were standing in the castle-yard, a young woman, with a diadem on her head and wearing a purple cloak, appeared at a high arched window between red curtains. It was the queen of the country, and she looked down at you with a stern, questioning look. You were standing alone. All the others stood aside, pressed against the wall, and I heard them whispering and muttering in a malicious and threatening manner. Then the queen bent down over the railing. Silence reigned, and she signaled to you, commanding you to come up to her, and I knew that she had decided to pardon you. But you either didn't notice her, or else you didn't want to. Suddenly you were standing opposite her, with your hands still tied. You were wrapped in a black cloak, and you were not in a room, but in the open, somehow, floating, as it were. She held a piece of parchment in her hand, your death-sentence, which stated your crime and the reasons for your conviction. She asked you — I couldn't hear the words, but I knew it was so — whether you were willing to be her lover, for in that case the death-penalty would be remitted. You shook your head, refusing. I wasn't surprised, for it seemed natural and inevitable that you should be faithful to me, under all circumstances. The queen shrugged her shoulders, waved her hand, and suddenly you were in a subterranean cellar, and whips were whizzing down upon you, although I couldn't see the people who were swinging them. Blood flowed down you in streams. I saw it without feeling cruel, or even surprised. The queen now moved towards you, her loose hair flowing about her naked body, and held out her diadem to you with both hands. I realized that she was the girl

at the seashore in Denmark, the one you had once seen nude, in the morning, on the ledge of a bathing-hut. She didn't say a word, but she was clearly there to learn if you would be her husband and the ruler of the land. When you refused again, she suddenly disappeared. At the same time I saw them erecting a cross for you — not down in the castle-yard, but on the meadow, where I was resting with my lover among all the other couples. I saw you walking alone through ancient streets without a guard, but I knew that your course was marked out for you and that it was impossible for you to turn aside. Next, you were coming up the forest path, where I anxiously awaited you, but I did not feel any sympathy for you, though your body was covered with the weals which had stopped bleeding. You went higher and higher, the path widened, the forest receded on both sides, and you stood at the edge of the meadow at an enormous, incomprehensible distance. Your eyes smiled at me as if to show that you had fulfilled my wish and had brought me everything I needed: clothing and shoes and jewels. But I thought your actions senseless beyond description and I wanted to make fun of you, to laugh in your face — because you had refused the queen's hand out of faithfulness to me. And because you had been tortured and now came tottering up here to a horrible death. As I ran to meet you, you came near more and more quickly. We were floating in the air, and then I lost sight of you; and I realized we had flown past each other. I hoped that you would, at least, hear my laughter when they were nailing you to the cross. — And so I laughed, as shrill and loud as I could — that was the laugh, Fridolin, that you heard — when I awoke." Neither of them spoke or moved. Any remark at this moment would have seemed futile. The further her story progressed, the more ridiculous and insignificant did his own experiences become, at least up to date. He swore to himself that he would resume and conclude all of them. He would then faithfully report them and so take vengeance on this woman who had revealed herself as faithless, cruel and treacherous, and whom he now believed he hated more than he had ever loved her.

He realized that he was still clasping her fingers. Ready as he was to hate her, his feeling of tenderness for these slender, cool fingers was unchanged except that it was more acute. Involuntarily, in fact against his will, he gently pressed his lips on this familiar hand before he let it go.

Albertina still kept her eyes closed and Fridolin thought he could see a happy, innocent smile playing about her mouth. He felt an incomprehensible desire to bend over her and kiss her pale forehead. But he checked himself. He realized that it was only the natural fatigue of the last few hours which disguised itself as tenderness in the familiarity of their mutual room.

But whatever his present state of mind — whatever decisions he might reach in the next few hours, the urgent demand of the moment was for sleep and forgetfulness. He had been able to sleep long and dreamlessly the night following the death of his mother, so why not now? He stretched himself out beside his wife who seemed already asleep. A sword between us, he thought, we are lying here like mortal enemies. But it was only an illusion.

6

AT SEVEN O'CLOCK Fridolin was awakened by the maid gently knocking on the door, and he cast a quick glance at Albertina. Sometimes this knocking awakened her too. But today she was sleeping soundly; too soundly Fridolin thought. He dressed himself quickly, intending to see his little daughter before leaving. The child lay quietly in her white bed, her hands clenched into little fists, as children do in sleep, and he kissed her on her forehead. Tip-toeing to the door of the bedroom he found Albertina still sleeping soundly; then he went out. The cassock and pilgrim's hat were safely concealed in his black doctor's bag. He had drawn up a program for the day with great care, indeed, even a bit pedantically. First of all he had to see a young attorney in the neighborhood who was seriously ill. Fridolin made a careful examination and found his condition somewhat improved. He expressed his satisfaction with sincere joy and ordered an old prescription to be refilled. Then he went to the house in the basement of which Nachtigall had played the piano the night before. The place was still closed, but the girl at the counter in the café above said that Nachtigall lived in a small hotel in *Leopoldstadt.* He took a cab and arrived there a quarter of an hour later. It was a very shabby place, smelling of unaired beds, rancid lard and chicory. A tough looking concierge, with sly, inflamed eyes, wishing to keep on good terms with the police, willingly gave information. Herr Nachtigall had arrived in a cab at five o'clock in the morning, accompanied by two men who had disguised their faces, perhaps intentionally so, with scarfs which they wore wrapped about their heads and necks. While Nachtigall was in his room, the two men had paid his bill for the last four weeks. When he didn't appear after half an hour, one of them had gone up to fetch him, whereupon they all three took a cab to North Station. Nachtigall had seemed highly excited, in fact — well, why not tell the whole truth to a man who gave one so much confidence — he had tried to slip a letter to the concierge, but the two men stopped that. Any letters for Herr Nachtigall — so the men had explained — would be called for by a person properly authorized to do so. Fridolin took his leave. He was glad that he had his doctor's bag with him when he stepped out of the door, for anyone seeing him would not think that he was staying at the hotel, but would take him for some official person. There was nothing to be done about Nachtigall for the time being. They had been extremely cautious, probably with good reason.

At the costume shop, Herr Gibiser himself opened the door. "I'm bringing back the costume I hired," said Fridolin, "and would like to pay my bill." The proprietor mentioned a moderate sum, took the money and made an entry in a large ledger. He looked up, evidently surprised, when Fridolin made no move to leave.

"I would also like," said Fridolin in the tone of a police magistrate, "to have a word with you about your daughter."

There was a peculiar expression about the nostrils of Herr Gibiser — it was difficult to say whether it was displeasure, scorn or annoyance.

"What did you say?" he asked in a perfectly indefinite voice.

"Yesterday you said," remarked Fridolin, one hand with outstretched fingers resting on the desk, "that your daughter was not quite normal mentally. The situation in which we discovered her actually indicates some such thing. And since I took part in it, or was at least a spectator, I would very much like to advise you to consult a doctor."

Gibiser surveyed Fridolin insolently, twirling an unnaturally long pen-holder in his hand.

"And I suppose the doctor himself would like to take charge of the treatment?"

“Please don’t misunderstand me,” replied Fridolin in a sharp voice.

At this moment the door which led to the inner rooms was opened, and a young man with an open top-coat over his evening clothes stepped out. Fridolin decided it could be none other than one of the vehmic judges of the night before. He undoubtedly came from Pierrette’s room. He seemed taken aback when he caught sight of Fridolin, but he regained his composure at once. He waved his hand to Gibiser, lighted a cigarette with a match from the desk, and left the apartment.

“Oh, that’s how it is,” remarked Fridolin with a contemptuous twitch of his mouth and a bitter taste on his tongue.

“What did you say?” asked Gibiser with perfect equanimity.

“So you have changed your mind about notifying the police,” said Fridolin as his eyes wandered significantly from the entrance door to that of Pierrette.

“We have come to another agreement,” remarked Gibiser coldly, and got up as though this were the end of an interview. He obligingly opened the door as Fridolin turned to go and said, without changing his expression: “If the doctor should want anything again... it needn’t necessarily be a monk’s costume.”

Fridolin slammed the door behind him. So that is settled, he thought, as he hurried down the stairs with a feeling of annoyance which, even to him, seemed exaggerated. The first thing he did on arriving at the Polyclinic was to telephone home to inquire whether any patients had sent for him, if there was any mail, or any other news. The maid had scarcely answered him when Albertina herself came to the phone to answer Fridolin’s call. She repeated everything the maid had already told him, and then said casually that she had just got up and was going to have breakfast with the child. “Give her a kiss for me,” said Fridolin, “and I hope you enjoy your breakfast.”

It had been pleasant to hear her voice but he quickly hung up the receiver. Although he had really wanted to know what she planned to do during the forenoon, what business was it of his? Down in the bottom of his heart he was through with her, no matter how their surface life continued. The blond nurse helped him to take off his coat and handed him his white linen one, smiling at him just as they all did, whether one paid attention to them or not.

A few minutes later he was in the ward. The physician in charge had suddenly sent word that he had to leave the city for a conference, and that the assistants should make the rounds without him. Fridolin felt almost happy as he walked from bed to bed, followed by the students, making examinations, writing prescriptions, and having professional conversations with the assistants and nurses. Various changes had taken place. The journeyman-locksmith, Karl Rödel, had died during the night and the autopsy was to take place at half past four in the afternoon. A bed had become vacant in the woman’s ward, but was again occupied. The woman in bed seventeen had had to be transferred to the surgical division. Besides this, there was a lot of personal gossip. The appointment of a man for the ophthalmology division would be decided day after tomorrow. Hügelmann, at present professor at the University of Marburg, had the best chances, although four years ago he had been merely a second assistant to Stellwag. That’s quick promotion, thought Fridolin. I’ll never be considered for the headship of a department, if for no other reason than that I’ve never been a *Dozent.* It’s too late. But why should it be? I really ought to begin again to do scientific work or take up more seriously some of the things that I have already started. My private practice would leave me ample time for it. He asked Doctor Fuchstaler if he would please take charge of the dispensary. He confessed to himself that he would rather have stayed there than drive out to *Galitzinberg.* And yet, he must. He felt obliged, not only for his own sake, to investigate this matter further, but there were all sorts of other things to be settled that day. He decided to ask Doctor Fuchstaler to take charge of the afternoon rounds, too, so as to be prepared for all

emergencies. The young girl, over there, with suspected tuberculosis was smiling at him. It was the same one who had recently pressed her breasts so confidingly against his cheek when he examined her. Fridolin gave her a cold look and turned away with a frown. They are all alike, he thought bitterly, and Albertina is like the rest of them — if not the worst. I won't live with her any longer. Things can never be the same again.

On the stairs he spoke to a colleague from the surgical division. Well, how was the woman who had been transferred during the night getting along? As far as he was concerned, he didn't really think it was necessary to operate. They would, of course, tell him the result of the histological examination?

"Why certainly, doctor."

He took a cab at the corner, consulting his notebook and pretending to the cabman that he was making up his mind where to go. "To *Ottakring,*" he then said, "take the street going out to *Galitzinberg.* I'll tell you where to stop."

When he was in the cab he suddenly became terribly restless. In fact, he almost had a guilty conscience, because, during the last few hours, he had nearly forgotten the beautiful woman who had saved him. Would he now find the house? Well, that shouldn't be particularly difficult. The only question was what to do when he had found it. Notify the police? That might have disastrous consequences for the woman who had sacrificed herself for him, or had, at least, been ready to do so. Should he go to a private detective agency? He thought that would be in rather bad taste and not particularly dignified. But what else could he possibly do? He hadn't the time or the skill to make the necessary investigations. A secret club? Well, yes, it certainly was secret, though they seemed to know each other. Were they aristocrats, or perhaps even members of the court? He thought of certain archdukes who might easily be capable of such behavior. And what about the women? Probably they were recruited from brothels. Well, that was not by any means certain, but at any rate, they seemed very attractive. But how about the woman who had sacrificed herself for him? Sacrificed? Why did he try, again and again, to make himself believe that it really was a sacrifice? It had been a joke, of course; the whole thing had been a joke and he ought to be grateful to have gotten out of the scrape so easily. Well, why not? He had preserved his dignity, and the cavaliers probably realized that he was nobody's fool. And she must have realized it also. Very likely she had cared more for him than for all those archdukes or whatever they were.

He got out at the end of *Liebhartstal,* where the road led sharply up-hill, and took the precaution of sending the cab away. There were white clouds in the pale-blue sky and the sun shone with the warmth of spring. He looked back — there was nothing suspicious in sight, no cab, no pedestrian. He walked slowly up the road. His coat became heavy. He took it off and threw it over his shoulder just as he came to the spot where he thought the side-street, in which the mysterious house stood, branched off to the right. He could not go wrong. The street went down-hill but not nearly so steeply as it had seemed during the night. It was a quiet little street. There were rosebushes carefully covered with straw in a front garden, and in the next yard stood a baby carriage. A boy in a blue jersey suit was romping about and a laughing young woman watched him from a ground-floor window. Next came an empty lot, then an uncultivated fenced-in garden, then a little villa, next a lawn, and finally — there was no doubt about it — the house he was looking for. It certainly did not seem large or magnificent. It was a one-story villa in modest Empire style and obviously renovated a comparatively short time before. The green blinds were down and there was nothing to show that anyone lived there. Fridolin looked around. There was no one in the street, except farther down where two boys with books under their arms were going in the opposite direction. He stopped in front of the garden gate. And what was he to do now? Simply walk back again? That would be too ridiculous, he thought, looking for the bell-button. Supposing someone answered it, what was he to say? Well, he would simply ask if the pretty country

house was to let for the summer. But the house-door had already opened and an old servant in plain morning livery came out and slowly walked down the narrow path to the gate. He held a letter in his hand and silently pushed it through the iron bars to Fridolin whose heart was beating wildly.

"For me?" he asked, hesitantly. The servant nodded, went back to the house, and the door closed behind him. What does that mean? Fridolin asked himself. Can it possibly be from her? Does she, herself, own the house? He walked back up the street quickly and it was only then that he noticed his name on the envelope in large, dignified letters. He opened it, unfolded a sheet and read the following:

Give up your inquiries which are perfectly useless, and consider these words a second warning. We hope, for your own good, that this will he *sufficient.*

This message disappointed him in every respect, but at any rate it was different from what he had foolishly expected. Nevertheless, the tone of it was strangely reserved, even kindly, and seemed to show that the people who had sent it by no means felt secure.

Second warning —? How was that? Oh yes, he had received the first one during the night. But why *second* warning — and not the last? Did they want to try his courage once more? Was he to pass a test? And how did they know his name? Well, that wasn't difficult. They had probably forced Nachtigall to tell. And besides — he smiled at his absent-mindedness — his monogram and his full address were sewn into the lining of his fur coat.

But, though he had made no progress, the letter on the whole reassured him, just why he couldn't say. At any rate he was convinced that the woman he was so uneasy about was still alive, and that it would be possible to find her if he went about it cautiously and cleverly.

He went home, feeling rather tired but with a strange sense of security which somehow seemed deceptive. Albertina and the child had finished their dinner, but they kept him company while he ate his meal. There she sat opposite him, the woman who had calmly allowed him to be crucified the preceding night. She was sitting there with an angelic look, like a good housewife and mother, and to his surprise he did not hate her. He enjoyed his meal, being in an excited, cheerful mood, and, as he usually did, gave a very lively account of the little professional incidents of the day. He mentioned especially the gossip about the doctors, about whom he always kept Albertina well informed. He told her that the appointment of Hügelmann was as good as settled, and then spoke of his own determination to take up scientific work again with greater energy. Albertina knew this mood. She also knew that it usually didn't last very long and betrayed her doubts by a slight smile. When Fridolin became quite warm on the subject, she gently smoothed his hair to calm him. He started slightly and turned to the child, so as to remove his forehead from the embarrassing touch. He took the little girl on his lap and was just beginning to dance her up and down, when the maid announced that several patients were waiting. Fridolin rose with a sigh of relief, suggesting to Albertina that she and the child ought to go for a walk on such a beautiful, sunny afternoon, and went to his consulting room.

During the next two hours he had to see six old patients and two new ones. In every single case he had his whole mind on the subject. He made examinations, jotted down notes and wrote prescriptions — and he was glad that he felt so unusually fresh and clear in mind after spending the last two nights almost without sleep.

At the end of his consultation period, he stopped to see his wife and little daughter once more. He noted with satisfaction that Albertina's mother was with her, and that the child was having a French lesson with her governess. It was only when he reached the front steps that he realized that all this order, this regularity, all the security of his existence, was nothing but deception and delusion.

Although he had excused himself from his afternoon duties at the hospital, he felt irresistibly drawn to his ward. There were two cases there of special importance to the piece of research he was planning. He was

busy for some time making a more detailed study of them than he had yet done, and following that he still had to visit a patient in the heart of the city. It was already seven o'clock in the evening when he stood before the old house in Schreyvogel Strasse. As he looked up at Marianne's window, her image, which had completely faded from his mind, was revived — more clearly than that of all the others. Well — there was no chance of failure here. He could begin his work of vengeance without any special exertion and with little difficulty or danger. What might have deterred others, the betrayal of her fiancé, only made him keener. Yes, to betray, to deceive, to lie, to play a part, before Marianne, before Albertina, before the good Doctor Roediger, before the whole world. To lead a sort of double life, to be the capable, reliable physician with a future before him, the upright husband and head of a family. And at the same time a libertine, a seducer, a cynic who played with people, with men and women, just as the spirit moved him — that seemed to him, at the time, very delightful. And the most delightful part was that at some future time, long after Albertina fancied herself secure in the peacefulness of marriage and of — family life — he would confess to her, with a superior smile, all of his sins, in retribution for the bitter and shameful things she had committed against him in a dream.

On the steps he met Doctor Roediger who held out his hand cordially.

"How is Fräulein Marianne?" asked Fridolin, "is she a little more composed?"

Doctor Roediger shrugged his shoulders, "She was prepared for the end long enough, doctor. — Only when they came this noon to call for the corpse—"

"So that's already been done?"

Doctor Roediger nodded. "The funeral will be at three o'clock tomorrow afternoon."

Fridolin looked down. "I suppose — Fräulein Marianne's relatives are with her?"

"No," replied Doctor Roediger, "she is alone now. She will be pleased to see you once more, for tomorrow my mother and I are taking her to Mödling." When Fridolin raised his eyes with a politely questioning look, Doctor Roediger continued: "My parents have a little house out there. Good-bye, doctor. I still have many things to attend to. It's unbelievable how much trouble is connected with such a — case. I hope I shall still find you upstairs when I return." And as he said this he reached the street.

Fridolin hesitated a moment, then slowly went up the stairs. He rang the bell and Marianne herself opened the door. She was dressed in black and had on a jet necklace which he had never seen before. Her face became slightly flushed.

"You made me wait a long time," she said, smiling feebly.

"Forgive me, Fräulein Marianne, this was a particularly busy day for me."

They passed through the death-chamber, in which the bed was now empty, into the adjoining room where, under the picture of the officer in a white uniform, he had, the day before written the death certificate of the Councilor. A little lamp was burning on the writing desk, and it was nearly dark. Marianne offered him a seat on the black leather divan and sat down opposite him.

"I have just met Doctor Roediger. So you are going to the country tomorrow?"

Marianne seemed little surprised at the cool tone of his question and her shoulders drooped when he continued almost harshly: "I think that's very sensible." And he explained in a matter-of-fact way what a favorable effect the good air and the new environment would have on her.

She sat motionless, and tears streamed down her cheeks. He saw them, feeling impatient rather than sympathetic. The thought that the next minute, perhaps, she might be lying at his feet, repeating her confession of the night before, filled him with fear. When she said nothing he got up suddenly. "Much as I regret it, Fräulein Marianne—" He looked at his watch.

Still crying, she raised her head and looked at Fridolin. He would gladly have said something kind to her,

but found it difficult to do so.

"I suppose you will stay in the country for several days," he began rather awkwardly. "I hope you will write to me... By the way, Doctor Roediger says the wedding is to be soon. Let me offer you my best wishes."

She did not move, as though she had understood neither his congratulations nor his farewell. He held out his hand but she refused it, and he repeated almost reproachfully: "Well then, I sincerely hope that you will keep me posted about your health. Good-bye, Fräulein Marianne."

She sat there as if turned to stone and he left the room, stopping for a second in the doorway, as though to give her a last opportunity to call him back. But she turned her head away, and he closed the door behind him. When he was out in the hallway he felt rather remorseful and for a moment he thought of going back, but he felt that it would have been ridiculous to do so.

But what was he to do now? Go home? Where else could he go? Anyhow, there was nothing more he could do today. And what about tomorrow? What could he do and how should he go about it? He felt awkward and helpless. Everything he put his hands to turned out a failure. Everything seemed unreal: his home, his wife, his child, his profession, and even he himself, mechanically walking along through the nocturnal streets with his thoughts roaming through space.

The clock on the Rathaus tower struck half past seven. It didn't matter how late it was; he had more time on his hands than he needed. There was nothing and no one that interested him, and he pitied himself not a little. Then the idea occurred to him — not deliberately but as a flash across his mind — to drive to some station, take a train, no matter where, and to disappear, leaving everyone behind. He could then turn up again, somewhere abroad, and start a new life, as a different personality. He recalled certain strange pathological cases which he had read in books on psychiatry, so called double-lives. A man living in normal circumstances suddenly disappeared, was not heard from, returned months or years later and didn't remember where he had been during this time. Later, however, someone who had run across him, somewhere, in a foreign country, recognized him, but the man himself remembered nothing. Such things certainly didn't happen very often, but just the same they were authentic. Many others probably experienced the same things in a lesser degree. For instance, when one comes back out of dreams. Of course, one remembers some dreams, but there must he others one completely forgets, of which nothing remains but a mysterious mood, a curious numbness. Or one doesn't remember until very much later, and doesn't even then know whether it was real or only a dream. *Only* a dream!

While Fridolin wandered along, drifting aimlessly towards his home, he entered the neighborhood of the dark, rather questionable street, where he had accompanied the forlorn little girl to her humble room less than twenty-four hours before. Why was she "forlorn?" And why was just this street "questionable?" Isn't it strange how we are misled by words, how we give names to streets, events and people, and form judgments about them, just because we are too lazy to change our habits? Wasn't this young girl in reality the most charming, if not actually the purest of all those with whom he had come in contact during the past night? He felt rather touched when he thought of her, and remembering his plan of the night before, he turned into the nearest store and bought all kinds of delicacies. Walking along with his package, the consciousness of performing an act which was at least sensible, and perhaps actually laudable, made him feel glad. Nevertheless, he turned up his coat collar when he stepped into the hallway and went upstairs several steps at a time. The bell of the apartment rang with unwelcome shrillness and he felt relieved when a disreputable looking woman informed him that Fräulein Mizzi was not at home. But before the woman had an opportunity of taking charge of the package for Mizzi, another woman joined them. She was still young and not bad-looking, and had on a sort of bath-robe. "Whom are you looking for?" she said, "Fräulein Mizzi? Well, she

won't be home again for some time."

The older woman made a sign to her to keep quiet, but Fridolin, anxious to confirm what he had already half guessed asked very simply: "She's in the hospital, isn't she?"

"Well, as long as you know it anyhow. But there's nothing wrong with *me,* thank heaven," she exclaimed vivaciously and stepped quite close to Fridolin. Her lips were half open, and as she boldly drew up her voluptuous body the bath-robe parted. Fridolin declined and said: "I was passing by and I stopped to bring something for Mizzi." He suddenly felt very young, but asked in a matter-of-fact voice: "In which ward is she?"

The younger woman mentioned the name of a professor in whose clinic Fridolin had been an assistant several years before, and added good-naturedly: "Just let me have those packages, I'll take them to her tomorrow. And I promise that I won't snitch any of it. I'll give her your regards too and tell her that you're still true to her."

She stepped closer to him and laughed invitingly but when he drew back a little she gave it up at once and said, as if to console him: "The doctor said she'd be home in six or, at most, eight weeks."

When Fridolin returned to the street he felt choked with tears. He knew that this was not because he was deeply affected, but because his nerves were gradually giving way, and he intentionally struck up a quicker and more lively pace than he was in the mood for. Was this another and final sign that everything was bound to turn out a failure for him? But why should it? The fact that he had escaped such a great danger might just as well be a good sign. Was it the all-important thing to escape danger? He could expect to face many others, as he was by no means ready to give up the search for the marvellous woman of the night before.

Of course, it was too late to do anything about it now. Besides, he had to consider carefully just how to continue the search.

If only there were someone he could consult in the matter! But he knew of no one to whom he was willing to confide his adventures of the preceding night. For years he had not exchanged confidences with anyone except his wife, and of course, he could hardly discuss this case with her. Neither this nor any other. For, no matter how one looked at it, she had permitted him to be crucified the night before.

And he suddenly realized why he was walking, not towards his house, but, unconsciously, farther and farther in the opposite direction. He would not, and could not, face Albertina now. The most sensible thing to do was to have supper away from home, then he could go to his ward and look after his two cases. But under no circumstances would he go home— "home?" — until he could be certain of finding Albertina asleep.

He entered a café, one of the more quiet and select ones near the Rathaus. He telephoned home not to expect him for supper, and hung up the receiver quickly so that Albertina wouldn't have a chance to come to the phone.

Then he sat down by a window and drew the curtain. A man had just taken a seat in a distant corner. He wore a dark overcoat and inconspicuous clothes and Fridolin thought he had seen his face before, during the day. It might, of course, be just a fancy. He picked up an evening paper, read a few lines here and there, just as he had done the night before in a different place. Reports on political events, articles on the theatre, art and literature, accounts of accidents and disasters. In some city that he had never heard of in the United States a theatre had burned down. Peter Korand, a chimney-sweep, had thrown himself out of a window. Somehow, it seemed strange to Fridolin that even chimney-sweeps occasionally commit suicide. Involuntarily he wondered whether the man had first washed himself properly or whether he had plunged into nothingness just as he was, black and dirty. A woman had taken poison that morning in a fashionable hotel in the heart of the city. She was an unusually good-looking woman and had registered there a few days before under the name

of Baroness D. At once Fridolin felt a strange presentiment. The woman had returned to the hotel at four o'clock in the morning, accompanied by two men who had left her at the door. Four o'clock! That was exactly the time that he, too, had reached home. About noontime — the account continued — she had been found unconscious in her bed with every indication of serious poisoning.... An unusually good-looking woman.... Well, there were many unusually good-looking women.... There was no reason to believe that Baroness D. or rather the woman who had registered as such, and a certain other person, were one and the same. And yet — his heart throbbed and his hand trembled as it held the paper. In a fashionable hotel... which one —? Why so mysterious? — so discreet?...

He put the paper down and at the same time the man in the far corner raised his, a large, illustrated journal, and held it to shield his face. Fridolin at once picked up his paper again and decided that the Baroness D. must certainly be the woman he had seen the night before. In a fashionable hotel.... There were not many which would be considered — by a Baroness D.... Whatever happened now, this clue had to be followed up. He called for the waiter, paid his bill and left. At the door he turned to look for the suspicious character in the corner, but strange to say, he was already gone....

Serious poisoning.... But she was still living.... She was living when they found her. There was really no reason to suppose that she had not been saved. In any case, he would find her — whether she lived or not. And he would see her — dead or alive. He would see her; no one in the world could stop his seeing the woman who had died on his account; who had, in fact, died *for him*. He was the cause of her death — he alone — if it were she. Yes, it was she. Returned to the hotel at four o'clock in the morning, accompanied by two men! Very likely the same men who had taken Nachtigall to the station a few hours later. This did not seem to point to a very clear conscience.

He stood in the large Square before the Rathaus and looked around. There were only a few people in sight and the suspicious looking man from the café was not among them. But even if he were — the men had been afraid — Fridolin had the upper hand. He hurried on, took a cab when he reached the Ring, and driving first to the Hotel Bristol, asked the concierge, as though he were fully authorized to do so, whether the Baroness D. who had taken poison that morning, had stopped at this hotel. The concierge didn't seem at all surprised; perhaps he thought Fridolin was a police officer or some other official. At any rate, he replied courteously that the sad case had not occurred there, but in the Hotel Erzherzog Karl....

Fridolin at once went there and found that Baroness D. had been taken to the General Hospital immediately after they found her. He also inquired how they had discovered her attempt at suicide. Why had they disturbed at noon a lady who had not returned until four in the morning? Well, it was quite simple; two men (the two men again!) had asked for her at eleven o'clock in the morning. The lady had not answered her telephone, although they had rung several times, and when the maid knocked on her door, there was no answer. It was locked on the inside. Finally, they had had to break it open, and they found the Baroness in her bed, unconscious. They had at once called an ambulance and notified the police.

"And the two men?" asked Fridolin, rather sharply. He felt like a detective.

Yes, of course the two men looked rather suspicious. In the meantime they had completely disappeared. Anyhow, it was unlikely that she was really the Baroness Dubieski, the name under which she had registered. This was the first time she had stopped at the hotel. Besides, there wasn't a family by that name; at least none belonging to the nobility.

Fridolin thanked the concierge for the information and left quickly, for one of the hotel managers had just come up and looked him over with unpleasant curiosity. He got back into the cab and told the cabman to take him to the hospital. A few minutes later, in the outside office, he learned that the alleged Baroness Dubieski

had been taken to the second clinic for internal medicine. In spite of all the efforts of the doctors, she had died at five in the afternoon — without having regained consciousness.

Fridolin breathed a sigh of relief that sounded now like a deep groan. The official on duty looked up, startled, and Fridolin pulled himself together and courteously took his leave. A minute later he stood again out-doors. The hospital park was empty except where a nurse, in her blue and white uniform and cap, was walking along a near-by path. "She is dead," Fridolin said to himself. — If it *is* she. And if it is not? If she still lives, how can I find her?

Only too easily could Fridolin answer the question as to where at that moment he could find the body of the unknown woman. As she had died so recently, she was undoubtedly lying in the hospital morgue, a few hundred paces away. As a doctor, there would, of course, be no difficulty in gaining admittance there, even at such a late hour. But — what did he want there? He had never seen her face, only her body. He had only snatched a hasty glance at the former when he had been driven out. Up to this moment he hadn't thought of that fact. During the time since he had read the account in the paper he had pictured the suicide, whose face he didn't know, as having the features of Albertina. In fact, he now shuddered to realize that his wife had constantly been in his mind's eye as the woman he was seeking. He asked himself 'again why he really wanted to go to the morgue. He was sure that if he had met her again alive — whether days or years later, whatever the circumstances — he would unquestionably have recognized her by her gait, her bearing, and above all by her voice. But now he was to see only the body again, the dead body of a woman, and a face of which he remembered only the eyes, now lifeless. Yes — he knew those eyes, and the hair which had suddenly become untied and had enveloped her naked body as they had driven him from the room. Would that be enough to tell him if it were unmistakably she?

With slow and hesitating steps he crossed the familiar courtyards to the Institute of Pathological Anatomy. Finding the door unlocked, it was unnecessary to ring the bell. The stone floor resounded under his footsteps as he walked through the dimly lighted hall. A familiar, and to a certain extent homelike, smell of all kinds of chemicals pervaded the place. He knocked on the door of the Histological Room where he expected to find some assistant still at work. A rather gruff voice called "Come in." Fridolin entered the high-ceilinged room which seemed almost festively illuminated. As he half expected, Doctor Adler, an assistant in the Institute and an old fellow-student of his, was in the center of the room. He raised his eyes from the microscope and arose from his chair.

"Oh, it's you," he said to Fridolin, a little annoyed, but also surprised, "to what do I owe the honor of your visit at such an unaccustomed hour?"

"Forgive me for disturbing you," said Fridolin. "I see you are just in the midst of some work."

"Yes, I am," replied Alder in the sharp voice which he retained from his student days. He added in a lighter tone: "What else could one be doing in these sacred halls at midnight? But, of course, you're not disturbing me in the least. What can I do for you?"

When Fridolin did not answer, he continued: "That Addison case you sent down to us today is still lying over there, lovely and inviolate. Dissection tomorrow morning at eight-thirty."

With a gesture Fridolin indicated that that was not the reason of his visit. Doctor Adler went on: "Oh, then it's the pleural tumor. Well, the histological examination has unmistakably shown sarcoma. So you needn't worry about that either."

Fridolin again shook his head. "My visit has nothing to do with — official matters."

"Well, so much the better," said Adler. "I was beginning to think that your bad conscience brought you down here when all good people should be sleeping."

"It *has* something to do with a bad conscience, or at least with conscience in general," Fridolin replied.

"Oh!"

"Briefly, and to the point," — he spoke in a dry, off-hand tone— "I should like to have some information about a woman who died of morphine poisoning in the second clinic this evening. She is likely to be down here now, a certain Baroness Dubieski." He continued more hurriedly: "I have a feeling that this so called Baroness is a person I knew casually years ago, and I am interested to know if I am right —."

"Suicidium?" asked Adler.

Fridolin nodded. "Yes, suicide," he translated, as though he wished to restore the matter to a personal plane.

Adler jokingly pointed his finger at him. "Was she unhappily in love with your Excellency?"

Fridolin was a little annoyed and answered, "The suicide of the Baroness Dubieski has nothing whatever to do with me personally."

"I beg your pardon, I didn't mean to be indiscreet. We can see for ourselves at once. As far as I know, no request from the coroner has come tonight. Very likely—"

Post-mortem examination — flashed across Fridolin's mind. That might easily be the case. Who knows whether her suicide was in any sense voluntary? He thought again of the two men who had so suddenly disappeared from the hotel after learning of her attempt at suicide. The affair might still develop into a criminal case of great importance. And mightn't he — Fridolin — perhaps be summoned as a witness? — In fact, wasn't it really his duty to report to the police?

He followed Doctor Adler across the hallway to the door opposite, which was ajar. The bare high room was dimly lighted by the low, unshaded flames of a two-armed gas-fixture. Less than half of the twelve or fourteen morgue tables were occupied by corpses. A few bodies were lying there naked. Others were covered with linen sheets. Fridolin stepped up to the first table by the door and carefully drew back the covering from the head of the corpse. A glare from Doctor Adler's flashlight suddenly fell upon it and Fridolin saw the yellow face of a gray-bearded man. He immediately covered it again with the shroud. On the next table was the naked, emaciated body of a young man, and Doctor Adler called out from farther down: "Here's a woman between sixty and seventy, so I suppose she isn't the one either."

Fridolin suddenly felt irresistibly drawn to the end of the room where the sallow body of a woman faintly glowed in the darkness. The head was hanging to one side and the long dark hair almost touched the floor. He instinctively stretched out his hand to put the head in its proper position, but feeling a certain dread which, as a doctor, was otherwise unknown to him he drew back his hand. Doctor Adler came up and, pointing to the corpses behind him, remarked: "All those are out of the question, so it's probably this one?" He pointed his flashlight at the woman's head. Overcoming his dread, Fridolin raised it a little with his hands. A white face with half-closed eyelids stared at him. The lower jaw hung down limply, the narrow upper lip was drawn up, revealing the bluish gums and a number of white teeth. Fridolin could not tell whether this face had ever been beautiful, even as lately as the day before. It was a face without any expression or character. It was dead. It could just as easily have been the face of a woman of eighteen, as of thirty-eight.

"Is it she?" asked Doctor Adler.

Fridolin bent lower, as though he could, with his piercing look, wrest an answer from the rigid features. Yet at the same time he knew that if it were *her* face, and *her* eyes, the eyes that had shone at him the day before with so much passion, he would not, could not — and in reality did not, want to know. He gently laid the head back on the table. His eyes followed the moving flashlight, passing along the dead body. Was it her body? — the wonderful alluring body for which, only yesterday, he had felt such agonizing desire? Fridolin

touched the forehead, the cheeks, the shoulders and arms of the dead woman, doing so as if compelled and directed by an invisible power. He twined his fingers about those of the corpse, and rigid as they were, they seemed to him to make an effort to move, to seize his hand. Indeed, he almost felt that a vague and distant look from underneath her eyelids was searching his face. He bent over her, as if magically attracted.

Suddenly he heard a voice behind him whispering: "What on earth are you doing?"

Fridolin regained his senses instantly. He freed his fingers from those of the corpse, and taking her thin wrists, placed the ice-cold arms alongside of the body very carefully, even a little scrupulously. It seemed to him that she had just at that moment died. He turned away, directed his steps to the door and across the resounding hallway back into the room which they had left a little while before. Doctor Adler followed in silence and locked the door behind them.

Fridolin stepped up to the wash-basin. "With your permission," he said and carefully washed his hands with lysol and soap. Doctor Adler seemed anxious to continue his interrupted work without further ceremony. He switched on his microscope lamp, turned the micrometer screw and looked into the microscope. When Fridolin went up to him to say good-bye he was already completely absorbed.

"Would you like to have a look at this preparation?" he asked.

"Why?" asked Fridolin absent-mindedly.

"Well, to quiet your conscience," replied Doctor Adler — as if he assumed that, after all, the purpose of Fridolin's visit had been a medical-scientific one.

"Can you make it out?" he asked, as Fridolin looked into the microscope. "It's a fairly new staining method."

Fridolin nodded, without raising his eyes from the glass. "Perfectly ideal," he said, "a colorful picture, one might say."

And he inquired about various details of the new technique.

Doctor Adler gave him the desired explanations. Fridolin told him that the new method would most probably be very useful to him in some work he was planning for the next few months, and asked permission to come again to get more information.

"I'm always at your service," said Doctor Adler. He accompanied Fridolin over the resounding flag-stones to the locked outer door, and opened it with his own key.

"You're not going yet?" asked Fridolin.

"Of course not," replied Doctor Adler. "These are the very best hours for work — from about midnight until morning. Then one is at least fairly certain not to be disturbed."

"Well," — said Fridolin, smiling slightly, as if he had a guilty conscience.

Doctor Adler placed his hand on Fridolin's arm reassuringly, and then asked, with some reserve: "Well — was it she?"

Fridolin hesitated for a moment, and then nodded, without saying a word. He was hardly aware that by this action he might be guilty of untruthfulness. It did not matter to him whether the woman — now lying in the hospital morgue — was the same one he had held naked in his arms twenty-four hours before, to the wild tunes of Nachtigall's playing. It was immaterial whether this corpse was some other unknown woman, a perfect stranger whom he had never seen before. Even if the woman he had sought, desired and perhaps loved for an hour were still alive, he knew that the body lying in the arched room — in the light of flickering gas-flames, a shadow among shadows, dark, without meaning or mystery as the shadows themselves — could only be to him the pale corpse of the preceding night, doomed to irrevocable decay.

7

FRIDOLIN HURRIED HOME through the dark and empty streets. After undressing in the consultation room, as he had done twenty-four hours before, he entered the bedroom as silently as possible.

He heard Albertina breathing quietly and regularly and saw the outlines of her head on the soft pillow. Unexpectedly, his heart was filled with a feeling of tenderness and even of security. He decided to tell her the story of the preceding night very soon — perhaps even the next day — but to tell it as though everything he had experienced had been a dream. Then, when she had fully realized the utter futility of his adventures, he would confess to her that they had been real. Real? he asked himself — and at this moment he noticed something dark quite near Albertina's face. It had definite outlines like the shadowy features of a human face, and it was lying on *his* pillow. For a moment his heart stopped beating, but an instant later he saw what it was, and stretching out his hand, picked up the mask he had worn the night before. He must have lost it in the morning when making up his bundle, and the maid or Albertina herself had found it. Undoubtedly Albertina, after making this find, suspected something — presumably, more and worse things than had actually happened. And she intimated this, by placing the mask on the pillow beside her, as though it signified *his* face, the face of her husband who had become an enigma to her. This playful, almost joking action seemed to express both a gentle warning and her readiness to forgive. Fridolin confidently hoped that, remembering her own dream, she would not be inclined to take his too seriously, no matter what might have happened. All at once, however, he reached the end of his strength. He dropped the mask, uttered a loud and painful sob — quite unexpectedly — sank down beside the bed, buried his head in the pillows, and wept.

A few minutes later he felt a soft hand caressing his hair. He looked up and from the depths of his heart he cried: "I will tell you everything."

She raised her hand, as if to stop him, but he took it and held it, and looked at her both questioningly and beseechingly. She encouraged him with a nod and he began his story.

The gray dawn was creeping in through the curtains when Fridolin finished. Albertina hadn't once interrupted him with a curious or impatient question. She probably felt that he could not, and would not, keep anything from her. She lay there quietly, with her arms folded under her head, and remained silent long after Fridolin had finished. He was lying by her side and finally bent over her, and looking into her immobile face with the large, bright eyes in which morning seemed to have dawned, he asked, in a voice of both doubt and hope: "What shall we do now, Albertina?"

She smiled, and after a minute, replied: "I think we ought to be grateful that we have come unharmed out of all our adventures, whether they were real or only a dream."

"Are you quite sure of that?" he asked. "Just as sure as I am that the reality of one night, let alone that of a whole lifetime, is not the whole truth."

"And no dream," he said with a slight sigh, "is entirely a dream."

She took his head and pillowed it on her breast. "Now I suppose we are awake," she said, "for a long time to come."

He was on the point of saying, "Forever," but before he could speak, she laid her finger on his lips and whispered, as if to herself: "Never inquire into the future." So they lay silently, dozing a little, dreamlessly, close to one another — until, as on every morning at seven, there was a knock on the door; and, with the usual noises from the street, a victorious ray of light through the opening of the curtain, and the clear laughter

of a child through the door, the new day began.

THE END

Theresa (1928)

THE CHRONICLE OF A WOMAN'S LIFE

Original German Title: 'Therese: Chronik eines Frauenlebens'

Translated William A. Drake, 1928

The final novel by Schnitzler, *Therese: Chronik eines Frauenlebens* was first published in 1928 by S. Fischer in Berlin. It deals with the harsh fate of Therese Fabiani, a single mother in the bourgeois world of fin-de-siècle Vienna, who experiences a slow and harrowing social decline. While she earns her meagre living as a governess in upper-middle-class homes, her illegitimate child grows up far away in the countryside.

After Theresa's father, a lieutenant colonel with Italian roots, is prematurely retired, the Fabiani family moves to the city of Salzburg. There, she meets Alfred Nüllheim, a school friend of her brother Karl, who becomes her first love. He soon moves to Vienna to study medicine, but before leaving, he asks Theresa to wait for him so they can marry after he graduates. Her father soon falls ill and is hospitalised in a psychiatric clinic, where he dies a short time later. Her mother, descended from old but impoverished Croatian nobility, then earns a living by writing sentimental serialised novels. To secure her livelihood, she wants to marry her daughter off to an old count, which Theresa refuses. When she falls in love with a young lieutenant and begins a romantic relationship with him, Alfred learns of it at his university. He insults her in letters. She is left devastated when the lieutenant reveals himself to be an unfaithful lover.

Disgusted by these experiences, Theresa leaves Salzburg to make her own way in Vienna. In the great metropolis, she takes on various positions as a governess. Although there are moments when she considers supplementing her meagre income by prostitution, she never actually does so. She becomes pregnant by a lover, Kasimir Tobisch, an impoverished flautist from German Bohemia. He abandons her, leaving the young, single mother no choice but to place her newborn in the care of farmers in the countryside, earning her living by looking after other people's children. From time to time, Therese flees her position after advances from the head of the household, and at other times due to conflicts with the women of the household. Meanwhile, her son Franz, whom Therese visits occasionally, grows up in the countryside. The young mother, now 27 years old, embarks on a series of love affairs in search of recognition and affection. When Therese becomes pregnant with her second child by an "affected" government official, she has an abortion, as she cannot afford to support another child…

Hugo von Hofmannsthal, a friend and noted Austrian critic, after reading the novel, wrote to Schnitzler on 10 July 1928:

> "The great life story Therese, however, has particularly captivated and occupied me… By telling this story — the life of a Viennese governess — you have already created an entire world… Your special talent for giving a subject the rhythm that transforms it into poetry is particularly evident here."

Stefan Zweig wrote to Schnitzler on 15 May 1928:

> "You have set yourself an immensely difficult problem, for nothing in art is more difficult and thankless to portray than the negative, a certain monotony of happiness and unhappiness, the tragedy of hopelessness. […] You certainly knew from the beginning that you were fundamentally counteracting a public tendency — people always want to see only wealth, affluent

milieus, exotic characters, rare and curious experiences — but nothing honors you more than that, at the height of your creative powers, you have taken on the most difficult task that awaits the artist."

By offering insights into Austrian society before the First World War, the novel paints a picture of the downfall of an era, conjuring the unrelenting atmosphere of a true novel of disillusionment. Without condescension or embellishment, Schnitzler describes the misfortune of a young woman from her own perspective. The periodical *Le Rider* called Schnitzler "Freud's doppelganger", due to how the "unwelcome child" syndrome is examined psychoanalytically. Moreover, a social decline is depicted. Therese falls into bourgeois circles from which she remains excluded. Schnitzler reveals himself as a sociologist of Vienna's inner city. The reader encounters no sentimentality, for the author persistently exposes Theresa's weaknesses.

In spite of the novel's merits, *Therese: Chronik eines Frauenlebens* was not a success with the public, due to how hopelessness entirely dominates the narrative, as the post-war period had ultimately darkened Schnitzler's "worldview." During this gloomy period readers were, of course, more in favour of light-hearted and positive tales to uplift their spirits.



Salzburg, Austria, 1914 — a principal setting of this late novel

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Schnitzler's friend and fellow author, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, 1910

I



THERESA WAS JUST sixteen years old, that spring, when Lieutenant Hubert Fabiani was retired on his pension and left Vienna, his last post, to settle down in Salzburg — not, like most of his companions, in Graz. When they sat down to breakfast and looked out of the windows of the house which they had rented, and saw across the roofs as far as the Bavarian mountains beyond, the lieutenant never failed to remind his wife and children how fortunate it was that he had been enabled to leave the smoke and dust of the great city while still a hale and hearty man, scarce sixty years of age, and retire to enjoy the delights of Nature, which he had longed for since his youth. He loved to take little walks with Theresa, and sometimes also with her brother Karl, who was three years older than his sister. Their mother remained at home, reading novels — always reading novels — just as she had done in Komorn, where they had first lived, and afterwards in Lemberg, and before that, in Vienna. She took no interest in her home, but, just as in the other cities, she soon surrounded herself with a group of women, the wives or widows of officers and officials, who would stop in for coffee two or three times each week and bring her all the gossip of the little town.

On these occasions, if he chanced to be at home, the Lieutenant would invariably retire to his room. And afterwards, at the evening meal, he did not fail to deliver himself of various malicious remarks concerning his wife's guests. His wife would respond with vague allusions to certain social diversions in which her husband had formerly indulged. Thereupon, it frequently happened that the Lieutenant would rise and leave the house, without saying a word. Late at night, the hollow sound of his footsteps could be heard reverberating through the hall as he slowly mounted the stairs.

When he had gone, his wife would caution her children against the disappointments of life, from which no one is exempt; and in particular, she would declaim against the martyr's lot which falls to women. She took her examples from the books which she had just read, and her narrative was frequently so badly confused that one was inclined to suspect that she had mingled the contents of several novels together. Sometimes, in jest, Theresa could not forbear to give voice to that suspicion. Then her mother would reprove her loudly and, turning to her son, she would caress his hair and stroke his cheeks, as if to reward him for his patient and credulous attention. But she did not observe how he would glance at his disgraced sister and slyly wink his eye at her. Then, presently, Theresa would return to her embroidery or, sitting down at the upright piano, which was always out of tune, continue her practice. She had begun to study piano in Lemberg and had continued in Vienna, under the guidance of a cheap instructress.

The walks with her father suddenly ceased, even before the beginning of autumn. For some time past, Theresa had observed that her father continued his walks only in order not to contradict his former inclinations. Whereas, formerly, he had greeted each new aspect of Nature with cries of delight, forcing his children to join in his pleasure, he now walked silently, without a word, intent upon arriving at the destination which he had set. Only when he had returned and faced his wife did he exhibit a certain belated excitement, and then he would endeavour to stimulate some enthusiasm within himself by recalling the various incidents of the trip. But even that soon ceased, and the tourist costume which the Lieutenant had worn since his retirement was definitely put aside and replaced by a dark business suit.

One morning, however, Fabiani appeared at the breakfast table in his uniform, and with such a stern and forbidding expression on his face that even his wife forbore to permit herself any comments upon this sudden change. Several days later, a shipment of books arrived from Vienna, and soon thereafter, another shipment

was received from Leipzig, and a local second-hand dealer also sent a package. Thenceforth, the retired officer passed many hours at his desk, acquainting no one with the nature of his work, until, one evening, with elaborate mysteriousness, he summoned Theresa to his room and read her what he had written. For four successive evenings he read to her, in the brusque tones of a commanding officer, from his carefully written, almost calligraphically inscribed manuscript, which proved to be a treatise on comparative strategy, dealing with the most important battles of the modern era. Theresa had great difficulty in simulating attention, for it was impossible for her to follow with understanding this dull and fatiguing discourse. Still, of late, her father had aroused her more and more to sympathy and pity, so she successfully resisted the insistence of her sleepy, heavy eyelids, and even attempted to express an active interest in the subject which had absorbed him. When the reading was ended, she kissed her father, as if she were grateful for the honour which he had conferred upon her.

At the conclusion of the reading, the Lieutenant carefully carried his manuscript to the Post Office. Thenceforward, from that day, he passed his time in various restaurants and cafés, in the company of certain recent acquaintances. These were, for the most part, men like himself; that is, elderly retired persons, pensioned officers, former lawyers, and even a superannuated actor, who had become too old for the theatre of the town and now gave elocution lessons, when he was fortunate enough to find a pupil. The erstwhile so reserved Lieutenant bloomed forth as a talkative, in fact somewhat obstreperous fellow, who chattered of social and political opinions which came rather strangely from the lips of a former officer. But since he always ended by giving in, as if the whole discussion had only been in jest, no one interfered with him — not even an important police official, who sometimes took part in the discussions.

II



ON CHRISTMAS EVE, a well-wrapped package, inscribed to the Lieutenant, lay beneath the Christmas tree, along with the other modest gifts with which the members of the family remembered one another. Inside was the manuscript, accompanied by a rejection slip from the publisher of the military periodical to which the author had sent it. Fabiani was furious. The date of the postmark informed him that it had been received several days before, and he at once accused his wife of having withheld it and placed it among the Christmas gifts with the intention of taunting and ridiculing him. He hurled the cigar case which she had given him at her feet and strode out of the house, slamming the door behind him. Afterwards, it was learned that he had passed the night in a disreputable house near Saint Peter's Cemetery, in the company of one of those wretched women who sell the service of their bodies to boys and old men. After this, he remained shut up in his study for a few days, to reappear suddenly, in the splendour of his parade dress uniform, while his wife was entertaining her guests at coffee. He surprised every one by his amiability and wit; and he might have left the impression of a consummate man of the world, had he not annoyed some of the ladies in the dark vestibule.

In the days that followed, the Lieutenant spent most of his time away from home, but on his brief appearances there, he was always genial and inoffensive. Then, when at last the calm of relief had settled upon the little household, he astonished his family by asking them suddenly, one evening, how they would fancy the idea of leaving this tiresome town and returning to the capital. He also hinted at some marvelous change impending in their condition of life. Theresa's heart began to beat so excitedly at the prospect that she realized, all at once, how very much she had really been longing to return to the city where they had lived for three years. It was true that she had been able to enjoy none of the pleasures which the city offers to the rich, but she had had such wonderful times just wandering aimlessly through the streets, trying to get lost — a delicious happening which had actually occurred on two or three occasions, and each time had given her an exquisite spasm of terror. Her eyes were still glistening with these memories as she caught her brother's disapproving glance. He had greeted her with just such an expression a few days before, when she had entered his room as he was busy with his mathematics problems, in company with his schoolmate, Alfred Nuellheim. She realized that he always looked at her disapprovingly, whenever she was full of joy. He was doing so now. Her heart was crushed. It was only a few years ago that they were boy and girl together, and then they were boon companions, laughing and playing and happy all day long. What had occurred to change all this?

Even Mother, who, to be sure, was never very much of a companion, had not formerly looked so perpetually displeased. Unconsciously, Theresa glanced at her mother, and the anger which she saw in her parent's face frightened her. She seemed never to have forgiven her husband for having been pensioned off before his time. She gazed at him as he raised his voice and declared that their days of plenty were not far distant, and her eyes were full of hate — as though she were recalling her youth, on her father's estate in Slavonio, when she rode through the primitive forest of their park, mounted on her fiery pony.

Suddenly the father looked at his watch, arose, and excusing himself, left the house at once, on the plea of an important engagement.

He did not return home that night. At the café, he made incomprehensible speeches against the Minister of War and against the Emperor; and from there he was taken to the guard-room, and thence, after a medical

examination, to an insane asylum. Subsequently, it developed that he had previously written a letter to the office of the Minister, applying for reinstatement, with advancement to a generalship. Thereupon, an order was received from Vienna to have him watched, but without arousing his suspicion; and his lamentable performance in the café that evening was all that was further necessary to justify his detention and commitment to an institution.

III



HIS WIFE VISITED him on eight successive days. After a few weeks, Theresa received permission to see him. In a large garden surrounded by high walls, down an avenue of tall chestnut trees, garbed in a shabby officer's coat, with a military cap on his head, an old man with a short, thick white beard came forward on the arm of an attendant whose pale face matched his filthy yellow uniform. "Father!" Theresa cried, stricken by a deep emotion, yet happy that at last she might see him once again. He passed on, apparently without having recognized her, mumbling some unintelligible words.

Theresa remained where she stood, disconcerted, unable to grasp this painful situation. Then she observed that the orderly was trying to explain something to her father. At first, the latter merely shook his head; then, he turned round and ran back to his daughter. As if she were still a little girl, he caught her up in his arms and held her in the air, staring at her. Then, suddenly, he released her, and began to weep bitterly. Presently, he covered his face with his hands, as if overcome with shame, and hastened off toward the dull gray building that was faintly visible through the trees. The orderly followed slowly. Theresa's mother had watched the entire proceedings with complete indifference. When Theresa returned to her side, she arose languidly, as if all the while she had merely been sitting there, waiting for her daughter.

The two left the park and emerged upon the broad highway, glittering and white in the blinding sun. Before them was the city, nestled in the side of the mountain and surmounted by the fortress of Hohensalzburg. It was only a fifteen minutes' walk to Salzburg, yet it seemed to Theresa that they would never reach their destination. The hills lifted themselves out of the hot mist of noon. A van went by noisily, the driver sleeping on the box. From a farmhouse across the fields, a dog barked mournfully at the silent world.

"Father!" Theresa whimpered.

Her mother glanced at her angrily.

"What do you want? It is his own fault!"

They walked in silence along the sunny road toward the city.

At table, that evening, Karl remarked:

"Alfred Nuellheim tells me that such sicknesses often last many years. Eight, ten, twelve..."

Theresa opened her eyes wide in horror. Karl compressed his lips and looked away from her at the wall.

IV

SINCE AUTUMN, THERESA had been attending the next to the last grade at the Lyceum. There she had soon been made to realize that diligence and attention were not in themselves enough. Her supervisor distrusted her. Although she was no more lax in her religious studies than her fellow students, and although she attended all the religious exercises which were obligatory, just like every one else, she was suspected of being lacking in piety. Her teacher once encountered her in the company of young Nuellheim, whom she had met by chance one evening on the street; and this the instructress turned to account as an opportune moment to deliver herself of various acrid comments upon certain customs of the big cities which were, as it would appear, gaining a foothold in the provinces. The look which she gave Theresa was hardly to be misunderstood. Theresa felt all the more wronged, since no such commotion was ever aroused by the behaviour of some of her schoolmates, who were, if the gossip were true, guilty of much more flagrant offenses.

Young Nuellheim, however, came to the Fabiani house more frequently than his studies with Karl would seem to have required. In fact, he even came on several occasions when Karl was not at home. At such times, he would sit near Theresa, admiring the cunning of her hands as they embroidered colourful flowers on a background of dull lilac canvas. Or he would listen as she somehow managed to get through one of Chopin's nocturnes on her out-of-tune piano. Once, remembering some earlier remark, he asked her if she still intended to become a teacher. She did not know exactly what to answer. One thing, at least, was certain. She did not propose to live much longer in these rooms and in this town. Soon — as soon as possible, in fact — she would find herself some kind of work, and preferably, that would be in some other city.

The situation at home was becoming worse and worse, as even Alfred could perceive. Theresa had ceased to speak, and had lapsed into an attitude of impassive retrospection. Her mother still received her friends, just as before — there were some strange men among them now, — and they frequently remained far into the night. This, in itself, did not greatly disturb Theresa, but it widened the breach between herself and her mother. Her brother not only carefully avoided his mother, but he likewise kept away from Theresa.

At meals, no more than the absolutely necessary words A were spoken. And sometimes it seemed to Theresa as though, in some incomprehensible manner, she were being held responsible for the downfall of the household. Somehow, although she could not grasp the cause or meaning of this sentiment, the fault was upon her head.

V



THERESA WAS ALMOST afraid to contemplate paying another visit to the asylum; but, curiously enough, it turned out very well, except for one disturbing incident. That incident, however, completely obliterated all the hopes which had of late arisen in her heart with regard to her father's condition. At first, her father had conversed with her in his old, gay manner; and then he had taken her about, showing her the extensive grounds of the institution, as though she were some distinguished visitor. He seemed perfectly rational. But when she took leave of him, he mentioned casually that, when she came the next time, he would receive her in his General's uniform, in anticipation of his approaching appointment.

The next day, she related the incidents of her visit to Alfred Nuellheim, who immediately asked to be allowed to accompany her on her next trip. It was his ambition, as Theresa knew, to study medicine and become a nerve specialist and psychiatrist. So, a few days later, they met, as if for a secret assignation, outside the boundaries of the town, and proceeded together to the asylum, where the former Lieutenant greeted Alfred as though he had been expecting him all the while. This time, he spoke of his youth, of the various garrisons which he had known, and of the Croatian estate where he had met his wife. He spoke of her as if she no longer existed, and he seemed to have completely forgotten his son.

Alfred was introduced to the officiating physician, who treated him with considerable deference; in fact, almost as though they were already colleagues. On their long walk home, Theresa was profoundly agitated at the thought of Alfred, walking beside her and talking with pleasant excitement of the episodes of their visit, but with no sorrow at all — just as if it were all merely a somewhat momentous occasion in his new career. He did not notice the tears streaming down her cheeks.

VI



IT WAS LIKEWISE at about this time that Theresa became conscious of a new attitude in the manner in which her schoolmates conducted themselves toward her. She became aware that they were whispering among themselves. Conversations suddenly ceased when she approached, and her teacher never spoke to her or questioned her any more at all. Never, nowadays, did she have a companion on the way home. Only in Clara Traunfurt's eyes did Theresa observe a sign of pity. It was this girl who, at last, took her aside and told her of the rumour that the company which gathered at her mother's house was not quite proper, and that the police had summoned Frau Fabiani to court and had warned her. Then, for the first time, it occurred to Theresa that, in fact, there had been no gatherings at the house in the past two or three weeks.

That evening, after Clara's explanations, she noticed that Karl did not speak a single word to his mother during the entire meal. Then she realized that, for at least a week, she had not seen him address her even once. When Karl had left the room and her mother followed shortly, she breathed more easily. She remained seated at the table, bathed in the rays of the descending spring sun. She sat there for a long time, gazing before her with fixed eyes, as if she were troubled by a nightmare.

That same night, she was awakened by a noise in the drawing room. She heard the front door being carefully opened and as carefully closed, and then she heard steps on the stairs. She arose from bed and looked out of the window. A few minutes later, the door below was opened, and she saw a man in uniform, his face hidden by the raised collar of his coat, accompanied by a woman, veiled and wrapped in a cloak, step out and quickly disappear round the corner.

Theresa determined to demand of her mother some explanation of these strange proceedings. But when an opportunity presented itself, her courage failed her. She felt, more now than ever before, how unapproachable her mother had become. They had become practically strangers. Lately, it seemed as if that aging, flighty woman wished to make herself appear a personage of mystery. She had cultivated a queer, shuffling gait, and upset things noisily, for no good reason, mumbling incoherent phrases; and no sooner had she finished her meal, than she left the table and locked herself for hours at a time in her room, where she remained writing with a scratching pen on long sheets of paper.

At first, Theresa suspected that she was preparing her defense against the police; but then she recollected that her mother had frequently declared her intention of compiling her memoirs. As it happened, however — Frau Fabiani mentioned it at table, very casually, as though it were a matter of common knowledge — she was writing a novel. Theresa glanced at her brother with involuntary surprise. But he was gazing beyond her at the Sonnenkringel.

VII

EARLY IN JULY, Karl Fabiani and Alfred Nuellheim stood for their final examinations. Alfred received the highest marks in his class, whereas Karl received merely a passing grade. Some days later, he set out on a walking trip, after having bidden his mother and sister farewell, hastily and coldly, quite as though he intended to return home that same evening. Alfred, who, according to their earlier plans, was to have accompanied him on this journey, seized upon a slight illness of his mother as a pretext to remain temporarily in the city. He came almost daily to the Fabiani household, at first, presumably to fetch books, and at other times to inquire for news of Karl. It so happened that these afternoon visits were followed, on fine summer evenings, by promenades with Theresa — promenades that were gradually extended into longer and more intimate walks.

One evening, as they were seated on a bench in the neighbourhood of Monchsburg, he again spoke of his intention of entering the University of Vienna in the fall, to study medicine. This, as well as most of the things which he told her, was not news to Theresa. In fact, when he confessed that he had foregone the pleasures of his vacation trip only to be enabled to pass these last few months in her company, she was not in the least surprised. She remained quite untouched, unmoved, and was even a little exasperated; it seemed to her almost as if this young creature, this shy boy, was presuming to present her with a promissory note which she had no desire to pay.

Two officers went by. One of them Theresa knew by sight, as she did almost all the men in the regiment stationed there. The other, however, was a stranger. He was a clean-shaven, dark-haired, slim young person, and — a peculiarity which attracted her attention — he carried his hat in his hand.

His eyes passed lightly over Theresa; and, as Nuellheim and the other officer greeted one another, he likewise greeted the pair; but, being bareheaded, contented himself with repeated nods of the head, at the same time fixing a vivacious, almost laughing glance upon Theresa. Nevertheless, he did not glance back to look at her, as she half expected he would, but turned a bend in the Allee and disappeared with his friend. After this interruption, Theresa and Alfred were unable to reëstablish the cordial tenor of their former conversation. They sat for a short interval in silence; then they arose, and walked slowly homeward in the twilight.

VIII

KARL WAS EXPECTED back around the beginning of August; but instead, a letter arrived, announcing his decision not to return to Salzburg at all, and expressing the wish that his monthly allowance should be forwarded to Vienna, where, through the aid of an advertisement, he had already secured a position as tutor to a young student. A casual inquiry as to his father's present condition and greetings to both his mother and his sister closed his letter, in which there was to be found not the remotest suggestion of regret at this apparently permanent separation. The content and tone of the letter made little impression upon the mother; but to Theresa, despite the coolness which had gradually arisen between herself and her brother, there persisted, to her own astonishment, a certain sense of injury, of having been forsaken. Her inveterate annoyance with Alfred deepened. He was not man enough to help her overcome this depressing loneliness, and his shyness began to irritate her and to appear somewhat ridiculous in her eyes. Once, while they were walking outside the city, he attempted to take her arm, and pressed it ever so gently; but she tore herself away from him with alarming violence, and for the remainder of the walk, and even while he was taking leave of her before her door, she continued to maintain a cold and unbending attitude toward him.

One day, Frau Fabiani accused her daughter of gross neglect of her duties to her mother, of paying absolutely no attention to her, and of seeming to have time for no one else but Alfred Nuellheim. In that very hour, Theresa accompanied her mother on a walk through the city; and during their promenade, she had occasion to note that two women, who had formerly frequented the Fabiani household, passed her mother without greeting her.

A few days later, a similar excursion led them to the outskirts of the city. On the far side of the stone boundary wall, an elderly gentleman with a gray mustache came toward them and was apparently about to walk by; but, instead, he suddenly turned and stopped, remarking, in a tone that sounded somewhat self-conscious, "Frau Fabiani, if I am not mistaken!" Frau Fabiani addressed him as "Count," and presented her daughter. He inquired as to the health of the former Lieutenant, and, quite unasked, told of his two sons, who, since the recent death of his wife, were being brought up in a French academy.

When he had taken his leave, Frau Fabiani remarked: "Count Benkheim, the former District Commissioner! Didn't you recognize him?" Theresa involuntarily looked back. She observed his extreme leanness, the elegant though somewhat too light suit which he wore, and the youthful, quick, and intentionally soft step with which he went away, somewhat more hastily than he had come forward.

IX

SOME DAYS AFTER this encounter, Theresa was at home, awaiting Alfred Nuellheim. He had promised to bring her some books and take her for a walk. As a matter of fact, the prospect itself bored her somewhat; she would have much preferred to go out alone, even though, of late, strange men had accosted her, and a few had even dared to follow her. At this time of the year, the city was usually overrun with strangers.

Ever since her childhood, Theresa had felt a strong curiosity and attraction toward everything that bore the marks of elegance and refinement. At the age of twelve, while in Lemberg, she had been smitten by the charms of a handsome dashing young Archduke, who was then serving in her father's regiment in the capacity of Lieutenant. How often she regretted that Alfred, whose parents were well-to-do and who had a good figure and fine features, never seemed to observe the changes in styles; that his clothes were persistently small-townish.

Entering the room, Frau Fabiani expressed surprise at finding that, on such an exquisite day, Theresa should have chosen to remain indoors. Quite casually, she began talking of Count Benkheim, whom she said she had met accidentally again that day. The Count was greatly interested in everything pertaining to the science of war. He intended, one day, to stop in and examine Father's library, with a view to purchasing it, should the books prove interesting to him.

"That is not true!" said Theresa, and without another word, left the room.

She took her hat and coat, ran down the stairs, and met Alfred at the door.

"At last!" she cried.

He apologized profusely — he had been unavoidably detained at home. It was already growing dark.

"What is wrong?" asked Alfred. "Why are you so hot and excited?"

"It is nothing," she replied.

At that moment, a novel thought occurred to her. Did not Alfred think it would be delightful to dine this evening in one of those big hotel gardens? He and she, alone, among all those strange people? He reddened. How happy he would have been to comply with her desire! But, alas! today it was quite impossible. He had very little money with him — certainly, not enough to cover the expense of dinner for two at a fashionable hotel. She looked at him and smiled.

He blushed an even deeper red, and she was a little touched.

"Another time!" he begged, shyly.

She merely nodded her assent.

They resumed their walk through the streets, and were soon outside the city. Then they directed their steps along their favourite path through the fields. The evening air was stifling. Over them stretched a starless sky. The city receded further and further into the background, as they wandered on through the fields of wheat. Alfred held Theresa's hand lightly in his own. He asked about Karl. She shrugged her shoulders.

"Oh, he seldom writes!" she replied.

"I have not had a word from him since he went away," said Alfred.

Soon again the topic of conversation was his impending journey to Vienna. Theresa was silent. Her eyes looked beyond him. Would she at least write to him? She grew impatient.

"What shall I write to you? Nothing ever happens here. One day is just like another."

"Yes, but even now, one day is like the other," he answered, "and yet, we have so much to tell one

another! Still, I shall be perfectly contented, even happy, with merely a word of greeting from you."

Emerging from the undulating fields, they entered the street. The forts of Nonnberg and the tall poplars were clearly outlined against the wall of darkness.

Suddenly, in a much milder spirit, Theresa asked if he thought he would be homesick.

"Only for you!" he replied, gravely.

This was the first time that Alfred, in speaking to her, had employed the more familiar "*Du,*" and she was grateful.

"I can't understand why you and your mother continue to live in Salzburg. You have nothing to keep you here."

"Nor anything to attract us elsewhere!"

"It might even be possible to place your father in another asylum, in the vicinity of Vienna."

"No, no!" she objected, vehemently.

"But you had intended — that is, you spoke of a profession, of taking a position!"

"Do not anticipate! I still have another year of school, before I can take my normal examinations!" She shook her head decidedly. In some strange manner, she seemed rooted to the spot. Her agitation subsiding, she added:

"But you will doubtless come back for the Christmas holidays, if only for the sake of your family."

"But we are a long way from Christmas, Theresa!"

"You won't even have time to think of me, with your studies and all! You will meet new people — women and girls!" She smiled to herself, fully aware that, where he was concerned, she felt no jealousy — that, in fact, she was quite devoid of any emotion.

"In less than six years, I shall be a doctor!" The words shot out abruptly. "Will you wait for me that long?"

She gazed at him. At first, her mind did not grasp the situation. Then, a slight smile played upon her lips. She was touched. It seemed to her that she was so much older than he! In that very instant, she realized that all this was sheer childishness, and that nothing more would ever come of it. She took his hand and stroked it gently.

Later, in the darkness, in the secluded vestibule of her home, as she was bidding him good-night, she closed her eyes and returned his kiss almost passionately.

X



EVERY EVENING, THEY would wander outside the city, through the seldom frequented paths in the fields, talking without end of a future in which Theresa could not believe.

At home, during the day, she embroidered a little, studied her French, practiced the piano, or read for short intervals; but for the greater part of the time, she sat almost without a thought, gazing idly out of the window.

In spite of the impatience with which she daily awaited Alfred's coming, she would not be in his company more than a quarter of an hour when she was overcome by an inexpressible boredom. Then, when he spoke once again, in the course of their walk, of his impending departure, she would realize, with a little shock, how eagerly she was awaiting that day.

He was aware that she felt no painful revulsion at the thought of his absence, and he told her as much. She was exasperated, and answered evasively.

Their first quarrel ensued.

They continued on their way homeward in silence, and parted without a kiss. Afterwards, for a long time, she sat on her bed in the darkness, staring out of the open window into the hot, black night. Her heart was heavy. There, not far distant, under this selfsame heaven, was the bleak building in which her poor, insane father was slowly perishing. Who knew how long — how long! — he might have to wait for the end! In the next room, her mother, also wakeful, was writing without pause. She, too, seemed to have fallen under a spell. They had become more and more estranged as the days had multiplied.

No girl friend sought Theresa's company. Even Clara no longer came. Alfred meant nothing to her — less than nothing, for he did not understand her. He was noble, he was clean — and Theresa knew instinctively that she herself possessed neither of these virtues; furthermore, that she had no desire to cultivate them. Inwardly, she held them in contempt. Why could he not have been a little more imperative in his attentions? Yet, all the while, she knew that any untoward advances upon his part would have been instantly repulsed.

Thoughts of other young people entered her mind; people she knew but slightly, and some possibly only from having seen them several times, but for whom, as she admitted to herself, she was sensible of a more keen attraction, a warmer feeling of kinship, than she had ever experienced in Alfred's company. And so she realized that even a quick exchange of glances on the street between two certain persons of opposite sexes, might constitute a stronger bond than hours of close companionship between two others.

With a delicious little shiver, she recalled that lovely summer day, near Monchsberg, when a young officer, hat in hand, had walked by. His eyes had met hers and glowed; then he had gone on, without so much as a glance behind him. She felt certain that in that moment, he knew more, much more, about her than Alfred, who believed himself engaged to her; Alfred, who had kissed her so many times, and who clung to her with all the fervour of his soul. She felt that all this was not as it should be. But the fault, if fault there was, was not hers.

XI

THE NEXT DAY brought a letter from Alfred. He had not slept at all the night before. Would she please forgive him, if he had hurt her yesterday? For him, the slightest cloud upon her brow was sufficient to darken the brightest day. Through four long pages, he continued in this vein. She smiled, somewhat softened, and pressed the letter mechanically to her lips. Then, half purposely and half accidentally, she allowed the letter to fall on her sewing table. She was exceedingly glad that she did not have to answer it. After all, they would meet this evening at their accustomed trysting place.

About mid-day, her mother entered her room, smiling sweetly.

"Count Benkheim is here for the second time" — it quite escaped her that she had failed to mention a former visit— "so as to give Father's library a more thorough and careful examination. He is ready to pay a very tidy sum to secure it. The Count expressed a sincere interest in the condition of Father's health, — and, by the way, he also asked about you, Theresa."

As Theresa remained seated and continued her embroidering in complete silence, her lips pressed tightly together, her mother drew nearer and whispered: "Come, we owe him thanks! Yes, you, too! It would be tactless not to greet him. I demand it of you!"

Theresa arose and, with her mother, went into the next room, where the Count was in the act of turning the leaves of a large illustrated octavo volume that was lying on the table. He came forward immediately and expressed his happiness at being permitted to see Theresa once again.

In the course of the polite and entirely unconstrained conversation which ensued, he desired to know if the ladies cared to make use of his carriage when paying their visits to the former Lieutenant. Also, he suggested that they might use it for a little excursion to Hellbrun, or to go wherever they wished. He would be delighted to place the carriage at their disposal. He became somewhat more reticent, when he discovered only opposition and unfriendliness in Theresa's manner.

Soon he took his leave, with the promise to come back after his return from a short business trip, which he could no longer postpone. And then, he promised, he would settle the business transactions concerning the purchase of the library. As a parting token of esteem, he kissed the hands of both mother and daughter.

The door closed after him. There was a heavy silence. Theresa was about to leave the room, without speaking. Her mother's voice retained her.

"You certainly might have been a little more cordial!"

Theresa turned, but remained at the door.

"Indeed, I was too cordial!"

And she again turned to depart. At this, her mother, although entirely unprovoked, began to heap abuse on Theresa's head, using many harsh words to describe her displeasure at her daughter's impolite, yes, impudent behaviour. It almost seemed that she was now giving vent to a resentment which she had allowed to rankle within her for days and weeks.

Surely, the Count was as fine a gentleman as that young Nuellheim, with whom her daughter chose to be seen promenading the streets of the city and its environs at all times of the day and night! Was it not a hundred times more decent to display a certain degree of acquiescence toward a settled, well-established gentleman of refinement, rather than to throw herself away on a student who was, after all, merely playing his own little game with her?

As Frau Fabiani grew more and more unsparing in her choice of words, her daughter could no longer doubt the truth of certain suspicions which for some time past she had entertained. Without shame, her mother now spoke of what she expected of her; what in fact, she felt herself entitled to require of her daughter.

"Do you imagine for one moment that things can go on as they are? We are starving, Theresa! Are you so madly in love that you are unaware of this? And the Count would support you — all of us — even Father. No one need know of it, not even young Nuellheim!"

In her anxiety, she came closer and closer to her daughter. Theresa could feel her breath upon her cheek. Shrinking away, she rushed to the door. Her mother called after her:

"Don't go away! Dinner is ready!"

"I don't want any dinner! Aren't we starving, anyhow?" Theresa cried, almost hysterical with excitement and scorn, as she rushed from the house.

It was dinner time, and the streets were almost deserted. Should she go to Alfred, who lived with his parents? Oh, he was not man enough to take up her cause, to defend her against peril and shame. And yet her mother was deluded by the belief that he was her lover! It was really amusing! Well, then, where to? Had she possessed sufficient money, she would have simply gone straightway to the depot and taken a train, bound no matter where, though preferably straight to Vienna. There were opportunities in plenty there to support oneself and to live decently, even though one had not been graduated from the Normal School. For example, the sixteen-year-old sister of one of her schoolmates had recently gone to Vienna to accept a position as nurse-maid in the home of an attorney. She was evidently getting on famously. One had only to manage such things. Had not this long been her plan? Without more ado, she bought a Viennese newspaper and, finding a shaded bench in the gardens, seated herself and began perusing the advertisements. She found a few offers that seemed to suit her purpose. Some one was looking for a governess for a five-year-old girl; another desired one for two boys; and a third, a suitable companion to take care of a somewhat backward little girl. In one house, a slight knowledge of French was required; in another, skill in needlecraft was desired; in still another, the rudiments of a musical education. She could satisfy all of these requirements. Thank God, she was not completely lost! At the very first opportunity, she would pack up her belongings and depart.

Possibly, matters might be so arranged that she and Alfred could travel to Vienna together. She smiled to herself. She would not tell him anything before, but simply board the same train, the same compartment — wouldn't that be jolly?

Then, she found herself reflecting that, after all, she would prefer to travel alone, or with anybody else but Alfred. She would not mind undertaking the trip with some one wholly unknown to her; say, that elegant stranger who had stared her so shamefully out of countenance as she was crossing the Salzbach Bridge, only a short time ago. He must have been either Italian or French. She carelessly turned the pages of her paper and read of the display of fireworks at the Prater, of a train wreck, of an accident which had occurred in the mountains, when suddenly she was held by the following headline: "Attempt to Murder Lover."

The story was that of an unmarried mother, who had shot and severely wounded her faithless lover. Maria Meitner — that was the poor creature's name. Yes, such things were likely to happen to any one. But no, not to her! Never to those who were clever. One must not take a lover nor have a child. One must never lose one's head. Above all, one must never trust a man!

XII



THERESA WALKED HOME slowly, much quieter in spirit now. In her heart, she no longer felt any anger against her mother. The meagre meal had been kept warm. Her mother silently placed it before her. Then she reached for the paper which Theresa had dropped on the table. She searched for the most recent installment of a romance which she was following, and read with almost feverish excitement.

After eating, Theresa picked up her embroidery and seated herself near the window. She thought of poor Fraulein Maria Meitner, who was probably in prison by now. Did she have parents? Had she been shunned? Deep down in her heart, had she loved some other man more than she did her lover? And why did she have a child? There were many women who enjoyed life, yet suffered no such unfortunate consequences.

All sorts of things came to her mind; forbidden things, which she had learned within the last two or three years, through the confidences of her schoolmates. The subjects of several indecent conversations, as she was wont to term such talk, were again animated in her mind. Suddenly, a distaste arose within her for all the things touching sex. She remembered how, only a few years ago, while she was still a mere child, she and two of her little friends had solemnly pledged their word to one another to enter a convent. Now, at this moment, she again experienced that same yearning. Only, this time it was different, more sober, and tinged with unrest and fear, as if there could be no peace or security against the hazards which existence in this world entailed, save behind the walls of a cloister.

The heat of the day was gradually abating, and the evening sun cast shadows across the house fronts — long shadows, which reached almost as high as the fourth floor. Her fear and sadness disappeared. She found herself more happy than she had ever been before at the prospect of seeing Alfred.

As was their custom, they met on the outskirts of the city.

Alfred's eyes glowed mildly. Theresa noted the almost noble candour of his face.

She felt a queer pang at her heart, and became ill at ease at the thought of how much more she knew or surmised of the facts of life than he. At the same time, she felt so unworthy of him! He came from a cleaner, finer atmosphere than she. He resembled his father in figure and carriage. She frequently saw Doctor Nuellheim on the street, and he had invariably passed by her without the slightest sign of recognition. Alfred's mother, and his sisters, too, likewise knew her by sight. Could it be that they suspected anything? Recently, when she had encountered them by accident, they had turned sharply round and had stared at her strangely. Alfred's sisters were nineteen and twenty respectively. No doubt, they both would soon be married. The family was well-to-do, and respected in the community. How easy it was for them! How completely absent from their thoughts was the most remote possibility that Doctor Nuellheim, physician to the city's best families, might ever be placed in an asylum for the insane!

Alfred, perceiving that Theresa's mind was elsewhere, asked to know if anything was amiss. She merely shook her head, and pressed his hand fervently.

The days were growing shorter, and twilight came early. Alfred and Theresa were seated on a bench, in the midst of the greensward. The horizon stretched out before them, broken by the blue hills in the distance. Vague sounds came up from the city. The long, droning whistle of a locomotive could be heard. Now and again, carriages rolled by in the road, and the shadows of pedestrians flitted past in the dying light.

Alfred and Theresa were pressed in each other's arms. Theresa's heart was filled with tenderness. Later, when she remembered this first love, it was always this evening that the recollection evoked in her memory

— she and he, sitting on a bench between the fields and the plains, with the night spreading itself over the hills and far-stretching horizon. Faint whistling sounds came to their ears. It was the croaking of the frogs in a lake, somewhere beyond the darkness.

XIII

SOMETIMES THEY SPOKE of the future.

Then, Alfred would call Theresa his dearest, his bride. She must wait for him! In six years' time, at the very most, he would have received his doctor's degree; and then, she would become his wife. And, as if she were now mysteriously protected, she was no longer obliged to suffer harsh words from her mother, but was treated almost lovingly by her.

One morning, Frau Fabiani came to Theresa's bed and, with gleaming eyes, handed her a newspaper. There, on the page reserved for fiction and general features, was the beginning of a romance, entitled: "The Magnate's Curse," by Julie Fabiani-Halmos. Frau Fabiani seated herself on the edge of the bed, while Theresa read. The story began precisely as did hundreds of others. Every sentence was familiar to Theresa, as if she had read it many times before. When she had finished, she nodded silently to her mother, with pretended amazement.

Frau Fabiani took the paper and proceeded to read the entire installment again aloud, her voice filled with emotion and importance. When she had finished, she said:

"The novel will run serially for three months. I have already received half of the money — almost as much as half a year's pension for a Lieutenant."

That evening, when Theresa met Alfred, she was greatly surprised to find him more carefully, yes, almost elegantly dressed. He might easily have been mistaken for one of the better class of travellers who frequented the city at this time of the year. Alfred was pleased to note the satisfaction in Theresa's eyes, and, with mock formality, begged the honour of her company, that night, at dinner in the Hotel Europe.

She accepted with delight.

Soon, they were sitting in the brightly-lighted, park-like garden, before a tastefully laid table, looking for all the world like a fashionable couple on their wedding trip.

The waiter received Alfred's order with some condescension. But they were served an excellent meal. By the unusual vigour of her appetite, Theresa was made conscious of the fact that her hunger had not actually been appeased this long while. The mild, sweet wine was quite delicious. At first, she was shy and constrained, hardly daring to lift her eyes from her plate. Then, gradually, she was liberated from her embarrassment, and glanced mischievously at those about her. On all sides, she saw eyes turned in her direction. Not only young and older men, but also women, as well seemed to look at her with pleasure and surprise.

Alfred became expansive, talking all manner of gallant nonsense, as he had never done before. Theresa laughed. from time to time, in a shrill and unnatural staccato. Alfred, apparently suffering from a poverty of amusing ideas, was asking in a whisper, for the third or fourth time, whether she fancied that they were being taken for an eloping pair of lovers, or perhaps for a young married couple, just returned from their honeymoon in France. At that moment, several officers passed by, and among them Theresa immediately recognized an officer with dark hair and yellow lapels as the person who had disturbed her thoughts more than once that week.

The officer knew her at once — she was sure of it — though he had the delicacy to turn his eyes away. He seated himself, not, as she had hoped, at a nearby table, but at one some distance from theirs. Alfred's good humour was suddenly gone. The gleam in Theresa's eyes had not escaped him. With the intuition of a jealous

lover, he was aware that something of deep portent had just occurred.

As he was refilling her glass, she guiltily pressed his hand; then, realizing the clumsiness of her gesture, said quickly:

"Shall we go?"

There was an awkward silence.

"Mother will be anxious about me," she added, although certainly she had no need to be deterred in her pleasure by such a fear. "What did you tell them at home, Alfred?"

He blushed.

"You know that my parents are away," he replied.

"Oh, yes!" she said.

Now she understood why he had been so bold today.

How clumsily he arose, after paying the check! Instead of allowing her to precede him, as was customary, he passed in front of her; and then she perceived how much he resembled a schoolboy in his Sunday clothes. She, on the other hand, clad in a simple blue and white foulard dress, walked between the tables toward the exit like a young lady accustomed to dining in a big hotel every evening. After all, her mother was a Baroness, who had been raised in a castle and had ridden on a fiery pony! For the first time in her life, Theresa was proud of that.

They walked silently through the empty streets. Alfred pressed Theresa's arm in his own.

"What would you say," he remarked, in a frivolous tone that did not suit him at all, "what would you say if we were to go now to a coffee house?"

She refused. It was too late. Oh, yes, he was indeed a schoolboy! He might have suggested something better than a farewell hour in a coffee house! For example, why had he not hailed that cabby there, asleep at his post, so that he might ride her out into the beautiful, mild, summer night? How closely she would have nestled in his arms; how ardently she would have kissed him; how much she would have loved him, if he had! But she could not expect such clever ideas to be born in his stolid brain!

A short time afterwards, they were standing before Theresa's door. The street was quite dark. Alfred drew Theresa to him more passionately than he had ever done before. She gave him her lips eagerly and, with eyes tightly closed, she knew how noble and pure was his love.

As she ascended the stairs, she was filled with yearning and sadness. She unlocked the apartment door very softly, so as not to disturb her mother; and, after she had gone to bed, she remained awake far into the night, reflecting that, after all, the evening had not been entirely unsuccessful.

XIV



WHILE AT TABLE with her mother, the following day, Theresa received a beautiful bouquet of white roses, brought to her in a narrow cut-glass vase. Her first thought was of the officer; her second, of Alfred.

The card read:

"Count Benkheim begs that the sweet little Fraulein Theresa will be good enough to accept this modest offering."

Frau Fabiani gazed steadily before her, as though the entire matter were of no consequence at all. Theresa placed the vase on the sideboard and, forgetting to return to the table, picked up a book and sat down near the window in a rocking chair.

Her mother continued her meal alone. Then, not uttering a word, she left the room, her feet dragging after her.

On the way to the station, the rendezvous arranged for the evening — she and Alfred daily chose a different place — Theresa encountered the officer. He greeted her with elaborate politeness, never betraying, by the slightest revelatory smile, their mutual secret. Her nod thanked him. She quickened her pace until she was almost running. She was relieved that Alfred, whom she found waiting, failed to observe her excitement. He seemed moody and confused. They strolled along the dusty, monotonous road towards Maria Plain. Some effort was made at conversation, though each painstakingly avoided all reference to the preceding night. As a storm threatened, they were soon forced to retrace their steps. They parted earlier than usual.

For all their sadness, the ensuing evenings were still delightful. The moment of separation approached. Alfred was to leave for Vienna during the first week in September, to meet his father.

Theresa's heart was grieved. When Alfred discussed his impending departure, she vowed eternal faithfulness and promised to persuade her mother to move to Vienna as soon as such a change might be practicable. She told him that, for the moment, her mother would hear nothing of it. But things might alter, during the winter.

In all this, she knew that there was not a morsel of truth. Theresa was more determined than ever to leave home, but she would do so alone. In her scheme, Alfred played no part. And this was by no means her primary deception of him.

Several days after the meeting at the station, she again saw the young officer, who was preceding her on the Domplatz as she was leaving the church which she occasionally frequented at this hour, though not through piety so much as in the desire of securing peaceful communion with herself.

As though it were the most natural thing in the world, he stopped and greeted her. She knew only his Christian name, Max. He apologized for at last seizing the opportunity to meet her personally. The regiment to which he was attached was leaving for three weeks of manoeuvres, during which time he sincerely hoped that Fraulein Theresa...

Why, of course he knew her name! Fraulein Theresa Fabiani was not an unknown person in Salzburg! Besides, was not a novel by her mother at that very time running in the "Tageblatt"? He hoped that Fraulein Theresa would think of him while he was away, as she might of a friend — a quietly adoring, patiently aspiring friend.

He took her hand, kissed it, and was instantly gone.

She turned round to ascertain if any one had witnessed the encounter. The sun-flooded Domplatz was

almost deserted. Only a few women remained on the other side. She knew them by sight. Whom does one not know in a small town? Alfred, all the same, would probably never learn from them that an officer had addressed her and kissed her hand.

He heard nothing. Nor did he know of Count Benkheim's visits to the house, or of the roses he had sent her, or of the second bouquet which had come that morning. He was in ignorance of her mother's changed attitude. She was consistently friendly and gentle, as though confident that she could calmly await further developments.

Theresa quietly permitted many purchases to be made for her — nothing costly; only necessities like underwear, several pairs of shoes, and English material for a street frock.

She also observed that the quality of the food served at home was improved. All this, surely, could not be coming from the money which her mother had received from the sale of the novel! Well, it was all equally inconsequential to her. It would not be long now. She was determined to leave home and, long before the Lieutenant returned, she would be far away.

Of all these facts, as well as problems, Alfred was happily ignorant. He still called her his dearest bride, and talked as though it were absolutely a foregone conclusion that, within six years, when he should become a doctor, he would lead Theresa to the altar.

When they sat on that same bench in the fields, as so often happened, and she listened to his protestation of love, she would sometimes respond. In those moments, she almost believed all that he told her, and part of what she herself replied.

XV



ONE MORNING, AFTER an evening that had been like so many others, a letter came from him. Only a few words. He wrote that, by the time she read these lines, he would already be on the train that was to take him to Vienna. He had not had the courage to tell her yesterday. Would she please try to understand and forgive him? He loved her inexpressibly, eternally!

She let the page slip from her hand. She was most unhappy, but she did not weep. It was all over. She knew that it was all over — and for ever. It was more uncanny than tragic that she should be aware of this, and he should not. Her mother came back from town. She had been shopping at the market.

"Imagine whom I saw this morning," she asked, gleefully, "rushing with bag and baggage toward the depot? Why, who but your Céladon! Yes, now he is gone. Didn't you bid him God-speed?" She was much inclined to use trite, old fashioned, bookish phrases in her ordinary speech.

Her mother's relief at this turn of affairs was only too manifest. At last, the sole obstacle to the successful culmination of her plans had been eliminated!

Meanwhile, Theresa's thoughts centered upon the prospect of immediate departure. She would leave today; she would follow him at once.

"I will borrow the few gulden I need for the trip. Perhaps Clara..."

She left the house, and was soon standing beneath the windows of her friend's home. Her courage forsook her; she did not dare to mount the steps. The shutters were closed. Perhaps the Braunfurts were still in the country! No, for there was Clara, coming out of the entrance. Pretty and well dressed, as usual, seemingly pure and innocent. She greeted Theresa effusively, then began almost at once on the themes that she loved best. Without actually expressing anything off-colour, she constantly toyed with double meanings. After casually mentioning her regret at the infrequency of these meetings, she presently alluded to the Nuellheim family in a tone the significance of which was unmistakable. It left Theresa in no doubt whatever as to her friend's attitude regarding her relation with Alfred.

Theresa was not offended, but, completely conscious of her innocence, she endeavoured to enlighten Clara. Whereupon that young lady replied, contemptuously:

"How can any one be so stupid!"

An acquaintance approached, and Clara took her departure with conspicuous haste.

XVI

TOWARD EVENING, AT the hour when Theresa was accustomed to meet Alfred, she attempted to write to him. She was surprised to find it so difficult, and contented herself with only a few lines. She was more unhappy than he, had no thoughts but of him, and hoped that God would arrange all things for the best.

She mailed the letter, knowing it to be stupid and insincere.

Returning home immediately, she found it difficult to keep her mind occupied. She picked up her embroidery, tried to read, practiced piano scales and exercises — to no avail. Finally, nervous and bored, she glanced at the paper that contained her mother's novel.

What a trite tale it was, and how pompous its language! It described the romance of a noble family. The father, according to the repetitious descriptions, was a hard and stern, though generous magnate; his wife, a sweet-natured, ailing creature; their son, a gambler, duelist, and seducer; their daughter, a blond person of angelic purity, a veritable fairy princess. A dark family secret was being unearthed. An ancient, worn-out, loyal servant knew that somewhere in the park a treasure was buried; that it had in fact remained there since the Turkish invasion. There was much talk about piety and virtue. No person in the world would have attributed to the author a desire to force an old Count on her own daughter.

Alfred's letters came almost daily. His father, he informed her, had awaited him at the station, and rented a room for him in the Alservorstadt. Together, they had visited the museums and theatres. The paternal attitude indicated an inkling of knowledge of their affair. While dining in a restaurant one evening, he had remarked that all young people cherish a host of impractical ideas which must of necessity be discarded. He, in his youth, had been obsessed by similar ideas, but had naturally overcome them. Before all else, Alfred must now think only of his studies, his career, and the serious business of life.

Theresa felt that Alfred might have spared her these details. Was he already trying to escape his responsibilities? She had demanded nothing of him. He could do as he liked. It was harder than ever to answer him now. Almost apologetically, she complained of the dearth of material for letter-writing in so small a town. Everything was pursuing its accustomed course.

She could not tell him of what was actually occurring — nothing about Count Benkheim's last visit, for example. He had been very entertaining, without making his real intentions too manifest. He spoke of his travels in the Orient. As a young man, he had been attached to the embassy in Persia; and at present, he was planning a trip round the world. With this last remark, he had gazed at her, intently and significantly. She pretended not to grasp his innuendos. Yes, a world tour would have been very much to her liking — but preferably, with some one other than the Count.

He likewise spoke of her father, not without sympathy and respect. He was certain that the shock to his pride, attendant upon his dismissal, had been the sole cause of his misfortune.

Theresa, in contrition over her neglect — it was now three weeks since she had given a thought to her poor, insane father — visited the asylum the next day. She found him seemingly in full possession of his faculties. He devoted particular attention to his dress. Not since the old days had she seen him so carefully and fastidiously garbed. But, alas! he did not recognize his daughter, and addressed her as though she were an utter stranger.

In a letter to Alfred, she alluded to the compassion and filial piety which she felt for the old man, but was incapable of revealing her true feelings in this matter, any more than in the expressions of tenderness and

yearning which she addressed to her absent beloved. What could she do? It was impossible to tell him the truth — that she sought pitifully to bring his features to mind, that she could not remember the tone of his voice, and that hours went by in which she never even gave him a thought.

She thought more often of another, of whom she had no right to think at all. One evening, Count Benkheim made his appearance, just as she was struggling desperately with a letter to Alfred. He hoped that he was not disturbing her. She, relieved for the moment of the labour of writing, came forward in a more friendly manner than usual. He, misunderstanding this amiability, drew nearer and spoke to her in a manner which he had not dared to employ before.

Without circumlocution, as though some previous conversation had given him license to assume this attitude, he began:

"Well, what does the little Fraulein think of a trip round the world? After all, we need not go to India or Africa."

He took her hands and spoke of a delightful spot, situated on an Italian lake, where he had sojourned many years ago. It was such a beautiful little villa, surrounded by a glorious park! Marble steps led directly to the lake. As late as November, the weather was warm enough for bathing. In the next villa, he continued, there lived three young ladies. At noon, all three used to step from their terrace into the water, first dropping their cloaks, under which they wore absolutely nothing. Yes, they swam in the lake, entirely naked.

He drew still closer to Theresa, and became so importunate that she was seized with fear and disgust. In her efforts to elude his too robust tenderness, she sprang up, striking the table with such violence that the lamp upon it vacillated perilously.

The door opened, and there, in the flood of light that crossed the threshold, stood her mother, as though she had just returned home. Her hat was set at an angle on her unkempt hair, and she was covered by an old-fashioned black mantilla with a beaded fringe.

She greeted the Count, begging him to remain seated, and took no notice of her daughter's confusion nor of the sounds which the swaying table had made only a moment before.

A banal conversation ensued, and when the Count addressed a question directly to Theresa, nothing remained but to make a harmless reply, which she did without much effort.

When the Count took his leave, he had every reason to believe himself forgiven. He could not know that he had only strengthened Theresa in her determination instantly to complete her plans for departure.

In answer to advertisements in the newspapers, she wrote to Graz, Klagenfurt, Brunn, and Vienna, requesting in her letters that the replies be sent *poste restante.* She received none, however, except from several employment bureaus at Vienna and Graz, and each of these demanded a deposit.

She was considering the advisability of leaving at once and trusting to luck for the rest when, to her own astonishment, the situation at home suddenly became much more comfortable. Her mother behaved quite amiably. The household seemed to lack nothing for its complete comfort. And from Count Benkheim, she received a note of apology, written in a pleasantly humorous, almost touching style. At his next visit, the Count's behaviour was quite perfect, as though he were a guest in the house of a refined family of his social equals.

Nevertheless, Theresa answered a few more advertisements of people who desired either a nurse or a governess. But on the whole, she was no longer as eager to make her escape as she had been before.

What it really was that held her in Salzburg, she would not admit even to herself.

XVII

ONE RAINY EVENING, as Theresa was standing at the entrance of the post office, reading a reply to one of her letters, she heard some one say:

"Good evening, Fraulein."

She recognized the voice at once. A delicious little shiver raced through her body, and although she did not utter a syllable, her entire being seemed to exclaim: At last! She turned slowly and, with a smile, greeted the Lieutenant as though she had long awaited him. Somewhat later, she realized that it might have been better if she had not smiled so happily.

"Well, here I am," said the Lieutenant, grasping Theresa's hand and kissing it repeatedly. "I am in town one hour, and the first earthly creature I meet is Fraulein Theresa! Well, if that isn't fate!..."

He continued to hold her hand tightly in his own.

"Are the manoeuvres over so soon?" asked Theresa. "That surely was quick work!"

"I was gone an eternity," said the Lieutenant. "Is it possible that you didn't notice it? Twenty-one days and twenty-one nights — every night full of dreams of you. Yes, and the days, too. Shall I tell you something?"

"I am not curious."

"But I am — quite! and for that reason, I should like to know what may be in that letter which has to be taken from the post office so secretly!"

She was still holding the letter in her hands, but now she crushed it and hid it in the pocket of her raincoat, meanwhile looking amiably at the Lieutenant.

"This does not seem to be quite the place for a chat," said the officer. "Will not Fraulein Theresa take pity on a poor, dripping Lieutenant, and share her shelter with him?"

Without further ado, he took her umbrella and held it over them both. He slipped his arm under hers and, as they walked out into the pouring rain, he began to recount his experiences — of camping out in the open three thousand metres above sea-level, of a storm on a Dolomite peak, of capturing an enemy patrol — it goes without saying that he was invariably victorious.

Meanwhile, they continued on their promenade through the empty, ill-lit streets, until they reached a narrow street and came to a pause before an old house. There the Lieutenant suggested, quite casually, that she come in with him and have a cup of tea with rum. He was concerned lest the dampness make her ill.

Theresa returned to earth suddenly. For what did he take her? Was he stark mad? And as he placed his arm about her, as though to draw her with him, she glanced sharply at him, to determine, once and for all, whether he were making sport of her.

He released her and assured her that he was well aware — in fact, had immediately observed — that she was a creature quite apart from ordinary considerations, and unlike the other women whom he had known. Since first meeting her, he had not thought of another woman, much less looked at one. And, though the gesture might put him in danger of appearing ridiculous, he would stand here before his door, every evening, at seven o'clock sharp. Yes, he would wait here until at last she came, if he had to stand there every evening for ten years. He swore it on his honour, by all that he held sacred. And whenever he might chance to pass her on the street, he would greet her politely, but never presume to address her until she herself gave him permission. He would stand right here by the door. In any case, she must remember the house number — seventy-seven. Every evening, at seven! He had nothing else to do. His comrades — well, they were good

enough fellows, but who the devil cared about them? He had no women friends — had not had any for a long time, he added, as he caught Theresa's doubting smile. If she was not there promptly at seven, he would simply remain in his room on the second floor. He lived alone. His landlady was an old woman, and quite deaf. He would sit in his cozy room, drink his tea, eat buttered rolls, smoke cigarettes and — hope for the next evening.

"Well, go on hoping, then, until Judgment Day," Theresa cried, as she turned and rushed away, without even extending her hand.

The next evening, at exactly seven, she slipped by his door. There he stood, smoking a cigarette, cap in hand, just as he had been that first time she met him. The yellow lapels of his uniform shone brightly, as though in all this world there was no lovelier colour. His eyes, his entire face, lit up.

Did he whisper her name? She hardly knew. At all events, she nodded smilingly and walked up to him in the doorway. Nestled closely in his arm, they mounted the stone stairs until they reached a dark brown wooden door that was slightly ajar. It closed mysteriously and silently after they had entered.

XVIII



THEY KEPT THEIR happiness secret. No one knew that, every evening, Theresa crept up the dimly lit stairs to the Lieutenant's apartment. No one saw her as a few hours later, she slipped out of the house. And had any one seen her, he never would have recognized Theresa in that heavily veiled figure.

Frau Fabiani had been commissioned by a famous illustrated periodical in Germany to write a novel. She imparted the news to Theresa with a great display of pride and conceit. Thenceforward, she remained behind locked doors, writing incessantly all through the day and half through the night. The household duties devolved entirely on Theresa. Though again reduced to very moderate circumstances, at this period mother and daughter laid less stress than ever on material comforts.

Meanwhile, Alfred's letters came daily. They were overflowing with tenderness and passion. For that matter, Theresa replied with more tenderness and passion than she had ever been capable of summoning before. She was not conscious of her falsehood, for she loved Alfred no less than before — nay, it sometimes seemed to her that she loved him more than when he had been very close to her. The letters that passed between them, and the sentiments that they expressed, had nothing whatever to do with the experiences that Theresa was undergoing at the same time. She was conscious of no feeling of guilt toward either of her lovers.

Theresa by no means allowed her days to pass idly. She had not forgotten her plans for the future. She pursued her French and English studies, and practiced at the piano regularly.

Max often presented her with theatre tickets. Usually, she would go with her mother, who did not trouble herself to inquire as to how she came by the tickets. On those evenings, Max generally sat in one of the first rows. True to his promise, he pretended not to notice Theresa and her mother, who had seats further back. Occasionally, he smiled through half-closed lids, and she knew that this smile signified a remembrance of the preceding night, or a fond hope for the ensuing evening.

While, for Theresa, these visits to the theatre were a welcome distraction, for her mother, they were a source of constant excitement. She saw, in the dramas, reflections of her own experience or the experience of those about her. She discovered allusions that the author, completely unknown to her or perhaps dead, had permitted to creep into his work, or which the local management had caused to be inserted out of consideration for the famous woman novelist. At such moments, she glanced meaningfully at Theresa, who never seemed aware of these strange occurrences.

Count Benkheim had ceased to visit the Fabiani household. Theresa hardly noticed it. She was reminded of him again only when she chanced to notice him sitting in a box with a lady whom she had seen in a French farce a few days before. She remembered that she had not been attracted to her by any exceptional ability as an actress, but by the extravagance of her gowns.

XIX

ONE EVENING, SOON after she had come into Max's apartment and was still occupied in removing her veil, there was a knock at the door. To her astonishment, Max, without surprise or question, called out: "Come in!" A tall, blond young man entered, accompanied by a young lady. Theresa remembered her as an actress in an operetta which she had recently seen.

"Oh, what a surprise!" exclaimed Max.

Theresa was not for a moment deceived. It was quite apparent that this surprise had been carefully planned.

The newcomer — likewise a Lieutenant — proved himself a very amiable and polite entertainer. The actress, contrary to Theresa's expectations, was reticent, and spoke only in monosyllables. She had evidently been cautioned on Theresa's account. She addressed her escort as "Herr Oberleutnant," using the more formal "Sie." Besides, she found occasion to mention the fact that her elder sister was married to a lawyer, and that her mother, the widow of a high official, intended moving from Vienna to Salzburg around Christmas time.

The conversation was then directed toward the theatre. When the company's various opinions and criticisms of histrionic art were exhausted, the general trend of the talk turned toward the love affairs of the directors, and especially that of one Count Benkheim with a very worldly lady.

The evening was brought to a close with a bottle of wine in a neighbouring restaurant. Here the conversation developed in a somewhat more entertaining, but, to Theresa, still unexciting fashion.

A few officers, seated at another table, greeted their comrades politely, and thereafter took no further notice of them.

Theresa excused herself at a rather early hour, but insisted that Max should remain with the others. She walked homeward, oppressed by sadness and feeling slightly ashamed at this turn of affairs.

The next meeting in Max's apartment was somewhat more lively. He had prepared cold cuts, cake, and wine.

It did not surprise Theresa to observe that Max and the actress were on more intimate terms than they had wished to betray. Although the latter still maintained a certain reserve, she spoke again of her mother, who would not be able to come at Christmas, but would fetch her daughter on Palm Sunday.

Later, in a coffee house, the comedian of the theatre, who was sitting on the other side of the room, winked humorously and called over to her: "Servus, Sintscherl." She thanked him curtly, and remarked: "The impudent thing! What does he imagine, anyway?"

Once, during an undisturbed hour, Theresa begged Max to refrain from arranging these "foursomes," as she really felt more at ease when alone with him.

He smiled, as though flattered; then, suddenly, he turned on her and chided her rather severely for her snobbishness. She cried a little, and the evening was sad and tiresome. At heart, Theresa was really happy when, a few days later, Max's friend and his fair companion again knocked at the door. And during their subsequent gatherings in the restaurants, and even in larger parties, Theresa was, if not the happiest, at least the gayest of the company.

XX

THE WINTER, THOUGH it came late, was ushered in with heavy snowstorms. The entire city was hidden beneath a soft, white mantle. The sudden thought of Alfred's possible coming disturbed the peaceful calm of Theresa's existence.

The snowfall ceased. Beautiful, sunny, wintry days followed. Theresa and Max went on sleighing parties in Berchtesgaden and Kônigsee. At first, they went alone; later, they were joined by officers and friends, almost all of whom were attached to the theatre. At the inns, Max frequently permitted his friends to exceed the bounds of good taste, and to take liberties with Theresa. He showed no displeasure or jealousy. Theresa spent Christmas Eve and night with Max at one of the hotels. As she was returning home, she could not overcome a slight anxiety as to her mother's attitude regarding her absence. The latter met her with a special delivery letter. Frau Fabiani said not a word. She merely looked at her daughter reproachfully.

Theresa felt a strange guilt when she observed, by the date on the envelope, that the letter had arrived the day before. She recognized Alfred's handwriting and, without opening the letter, was aware of its contents. The element of surprise was therefore lacking as she read.

Alfred wrote that he was deeply ashamed of having wasted his affections on her, and that he hoped sincerely that she would be happy with the Lieutenant. He had unfortunately, been unable to awaken in her such delightful sentiments.

The quiet tone in which the letter was written at first shamed Theresa. After a short period of contrition, she sighed with relief. She need no longer place any restrictions upon herself. From that time on, she was seen everywhere with her lover, even at the theatre. She also permitted — and this was a thing to which formerly she had emphatically objected — the offering of small gifts. Among others, there was a medallion and chain which she wore constantly about her neck, a half-dozen handkerchiefs, and a pair of mules, made of red leather and trimmed with swan's-down; the exact duplicate of a pair which the Lieutenant's actress friend had recently worn in a play.

It was shortly after the beginning of the New Year that Theresa met Clara in front of the Lieutenant's house. Her friend was just returning from a sleighing trip. Almost immediately, Clara began to berate Theresa — not on account of her manner of existence, but because of her indiscretion.

"Surely, it doesn't do you any good to have everybody talking about you," she said. "Now, take me, for instance. I am having my fourth affair, and no one has the slightest suspicion of it! Were you to spread the story, no one would believe you." Laughingly, she promised to visit Theresa soon and tell her all about her adventures. She confessed that she herself felt a veritable craving to do so.

Theresa watched her friend depart with somewhat mixed emotions. Uppermost in her mind was the desire to be alone. Confidences always seemed to induce this reaction in her.

Alfred's letter, though apparently a farewell note, was not the last. He maintained a complete silence for several weeks; then, suddenly, he began to send letters in an entirely different vein. They were filled with reproaches. He used words which brought blushes to Theresa's cheeks. She had never dreamed that a person like Alfred could ever bring himself to put such words on paper.

She was determined to burn unread any other letters which might come. Yet, when a few days passed without mail from him, she was seized with a strange unrest that was not quieted until a letter had arrived, although she herself had offered him no response. After a dozen such, Alfred's letters abruptly ceased. In one

of the rare missives from her brother, he mentioned having met Alfred in the city. He had found him looking very well, in good spirits, and elegantly clothed. On this last remark he laid especial stress.

Thereafter, Alfred's angry letters seemed like so many ridiculous lies to Theresa. She threw a number of them in the stove and watched them as they were slowly reduced to ashes.

Some time elapsed before Clara redeemed her promise. She entered Theresa's room one day, late in February. The snow was beginning to melt and the first spring breezes were wafted in through the open window.

Instead of relating the chronicle of her adventures, as she had promised to do, she imparted the news of her engagement to an engineer. All that talk of a few weeks ago had been utter nonsense, she explained. She had been moved to it by exasperation over her fiancé's reticence. She felt that she could count on Theresa never to breathe a word to a soul of what she had said. Then she expatiated on her sweetheart and the prospect of her future peace and happiness in the little mountain village where her husband-to-be was directing the construction of a railroad.

She remained less than a quarter of an hour, embraced Theresa rather brusquely, and neglected to invite her to the wedding.

XXI

ON THESE DECEPTIVE early spring days, Theresa felt depressed, although not actually pained, at realizing that her affection for Max was spending itself. Day by day, she became increasingly aware of the utter emptiness and hopelessness of her existence.

It had been months since she had last visited the asylum where her father was confined. She now unwillingly placed the blame for this neglect upon a chance remark made by the assistant physician, that "her father did not derive any benefit from these visits, and that she herself merely carried away painful impressions that would torment her for the rest of her life."

But, one day, a letter from the institution arrived. As frequently occurs in such maladies, the old Lieutenant was surprisingly improved, and had expressed a desire to see his daughter. Theresa discovered in these words more significance than they were really intended to convey. She was already prepared to hear her father's voice uplifted in advice and comforting sympathy.

And so she wandered, one dreary day, down the main road toward the asylum. The snow was melting, and had filled the road with dirty little pools. Theresa was depressed. As she entered the little cell-like compartment, she saw her father sitting at a table covered with books and maps, just as he had loved to sit in former days. He looked up, and his eyes seemed filled with intelligence and the joy of living. But as soon as he perceived her presence (it was never clear to her whether he had recognized her or not) his features became distorted and his fingers contracted over a book as though he were about to hurl it at her. The attendant seized his hands. At the same moment, the doctor entered and took in the situation at a glance.

"This is your daughter," he said. "You wanted to see her. Now that she is here, you probably have something to say to her. — Calm yourself!" he added, as he noticed with what difficulty the attendant was restraining the raving man.

The old Lieutenant, freeing his right hand, pointed commandingly to the door. As Theresa made no move to obey his gesture, his eyes so forbiddingly darkened with rage that the doctor himself grasped her and almost thrust her from the room. The door was locked immediately afterwards.

"Strange," said the doctor, as they stood in the corridor. "Even we physicians are frequently deceived. When I spoke to him this morning of your intended visit, he seemed overjoyed. He should not have been given the maps and books."

As she hesitated at the door, he pressed her hand with a warmth that was not customary with him, and remarked:

"Perhaps the Fraulein will try again in a few days. I will speak to him, and personally see to it that the dangerous books are removed. Reading seems to induce all sorts of memories. Just drop me a line, Fraulein, to let me know when you are coming, and I will wait for you at the door."

He looked at her strangely, and pressed her hand still more firmly. She was convinced that it was not the visit to her father that most interested him. She nodded. But she knew that this was her last visit.

She returned slowly to the city.

"He knows everything," she told herself. "That is why he ordered me out. What is to become of me now?"

Suddenly, like a ray of light, the idea came to her that when Max received his discharge he might enter his uncle's factory, of which he had recently spoken. Then he could marry her. Yes, he must do so! One of his comrades had but shortly before left the service to marry a woman of questionable character, whereas she had

been “a respectable, decent girl,” before Max had seduced her. At this phrase, she for the first time became conscious of what had transpired. Was she not the daughter of an officer? Though in poor circumstances, she belonged to a good family. Her mother had noble blood in her veins. Max owed it to her to make her his wife!

At their next meeting, without awaiting the right moment, she ventured on little innuendos. Either he would not or did not understand. She laughed and kissed away his ill-humour. When, later, she made her demands more clear, they provoked a quarrel. Though she had no real tenderness for him, she was still in love; and, accordingly, she abandoned her attempts as suddenly as she had begun them, allowing matters to go on as usual.

XXII



SPRING WAS COMING. The theatrical season was at an end.

Max was often detained and unable to receive Theresa. He even occasionally spent a day or two out of town. These circumstances would never have struck Theresa as unusual, were it not for the fact that, one evening in a restaurant, the name of a very popular actress was mentioned, and she intercepted a knowing wink directed towards Max by one of his comrades. Max seemed annoyed at this betrayal.

Theresa became suspicious and, at their next visit to the theatre, it did not escape her notice that the young lady in question, while taking her bow, glanced and nodded to Max, who was sitting in the first row. Under one pretext or another, Theresa allowed her mother to go home alone, while she waited for the Lieutenant. He was very much upset at this, and declined her offer to go with him to his apartment. He had made other arrangements for the night; he had promised to meet some friends.

His anger, however, suddenly evaporated, and in the next moment he became very pleasant, asked if he might escort her home, took her arm, and actually led her to her door. He cursed his inopportune promise, and simulated annoyance at his deprivation so well that Theresa's fears were allayed.

As Theresa opened the door to her room, to her amazement she beheld her mother, kneeling before Theresa's own dresser and rummaging through the lower drawer. Theresa's entrance frightened her mother, who stammered:

"I only wanted to set your things in order. You never seem to have the time!"

"You are setting my things in order, in the middle of the night! You don't say so!"

"Now, don't excite yourself so, child. I really meant no harm!" Still confused, she added: "Look for yourself, and you will see that nothing is missing."

She left, and Theresa immediately knelt before the open drawer. After Theresa had burned the majority of Alfred's letters, she had received several more at various times. These were in similar vein, yet a little more sentimental, like the gradual vanishing of a storm on the horizon. Several were missing, and some of the hastily scribbled notes that Max had occasionally written to her were not there.

What could her mother want with them? Did she have ideas of practicing extortion? Was it merely curiosity? Or did she feel the need of warming her aged heart with the love adventures of others?

She knew, in any case, that she could not longer live under the same roof with her mother. Why, she wondered, had she so quickly abandoned her plans of persuading Max to marry her? She decided to pursue this matter to a conclusion upon the following day. This decision, which must necessarily conduce to a clearer understanding between them, calmed her so much that she sank into a deep sleep. The rest so strengthened her that, the next day, she could appear amiable toward her mother and avoid all allusion to the happenings of the preceding night.

It may have been the beautiful March day that held the suggestion of spring within it, or the fact that the morrow was Palm Sunday and that the whole theatrical company would disband the day following; whatever the reason, she actually looked forward with pleasant expectation to her appointment with Max.

Max had not yet come home when, at an early hour, she entered his room. A strange thought flitted through her mind, as though induced by the occurrence of the night before: she thought of examining her lover's bureau drawers. To ward off temptation, she picked up a book lying on the table. Max was accustomed to reading whatever chanced to fall into his hands: novels, occasionally plays, invariably in well-

worn copies, since they had already passed through many hands before they came to his. She glanced through this and that book, without paying particular attention to the contents. As she carelessly pushed one aside, she found the typewritten manuscript of the new play which she had witnessed only a few days before. It seemed almost as though it had been purposely hidden there. She turned the pages of the copy, and noticed that the name "Beate" was underlined throughout with a red pencil. Beate? Was that not the name of the heroine in the play? The part was played by the woman whom she suspected of intimate relations with Max! Beate — why, of course! The connection was clear.

After this discovery, she felt justified in making a further search. This she did, with such complete disregard of consequences that, when Max entered, he found her before his bureau drawers. The letters, veils, and suspicious underthings of lace which she had strewn about her on the floor, spared him the trouble of lying.

He rushed at her. She freed herself, screaming: "Cad!" Without awaiting a reply, any excuses, or attempted justifications, she rushed to the door.

He caught her by the shoulders.

"What a child you are!" he said.

She stared at him, wide-eyed.

"She isn't here any more!"

She continued to stare dazedly at him, and he added:

"Upon my word of honour!"

At last she understood, laughed harshly, and left. He hurried after her, and, on the dark stairs, grasped her by the arm.

"Be so good as to let me go!" she demanded, through tightly clenched teeth.

"I shall do nothing of the kind!" he replied. "You are a little fool. Now, listen to me. I couldn't help it. She ran after me. You can ask her, if you wish. I am certainly glad she is gone. I had every intention of telling you the whole story today — honestly!"

He held her close to him. She was weeping. Again and again, he repeated: "Child!" With one arm, he still held her fast, while with the other, he caressed her hair, cheeks, and arms.

"Anyway," he said, "you forgot your hat upstairs. For heaven's sake, calm yourself! Let me explain! Then you will still be at liberty to do whatever you choose."

She followed him to his room. He drew her upon his knee, and swore that she was the only one he had ever loved, and that "such a thing" should never happen again.

She did not believe a word he said. Yet, she remained. The instant she came home, she locked herself in her room.

Tired and disgusted, she packed her belongings, left a frigid little note for her mother, and boarded the noon train for Vienna.

XXIII



THERESA'S FIRST NIGHT in Vienna was spent in a very mediocre hotel near the railway station. The next morning, according to the schedule which she had planned for herself, she made her way through the town.

The day was warm and spring-like. Violets were being sold on the streets. Though women were wearing their new spring clothes, Theresa felt quite at ease in her simple and becoming winter costume. She was happy to have left Salzburg — to be alone at last.

She made a list of the names and addresses of those who required nursemaids or governesses, and wandered about the entire day, with only a pause for lunch at noon. Some found her too young; others would not consider her without recommendations; again, she did not feel sympathetically inclined towards those who might have engaged her. As evening was coming on and she was thoroughly exhausted, she decided to accept a position in a family with two children aged respectively three and seven years. In comparison with what she was to experience in this house, her life at home, even at its worst, was glorious.

The family was in poor circumstances. The children were always hungry, and brought noise, but no happiness, into the little circle. The parents were mean and discouraged.

Theresa had to supplement the meagre meals they gave her out of her own money. Soon, her little earnings were exhausted, and after a few weeks, unable to tolerate her employers any longer, she left. In her next position, as governess to a widow's two children, she was treated as a servant. A third engagement displeased her because of the uncleanliness which she found in the house. In still another place, the importunities of the male member of the household soon drove her away.

She changed her position many more times, not without a feeling that she herself was partly to blame for her misfortunes. She was impatient and haughty, and totally indifferent to the children entrusted to her care.

These were indeed bad times. Theresa had not a moment for introspection, though occasionally, when lying in her narrow bed against a cold wall, or awakened by the crying of one of her charges, or disturbed by the morning noises of servants, or possibly when she was in the park with the children and thus had an unexpected moment of leisure, then the utter poverty and dreariness of her situation would overcome her with sudden poignancy.

She was usually too weary to take advantage of the few free afternoons allotted to her. Once, she took a walk with a nursemaid of the neighbourhood. This person told of the innumerable and successfully evaded attempts made upon her by the fathers and sons of the families in which she had worked.

On this particular Sunday afternoon in the Prater, this nurse permitted the most offensive kind of addresses from all sorts of young men, and her answers were quite as unrestrained. Theresa was overcome with disgust. She managed to slip away unobserved, and returned home alone.

XXIV

DURING THIS TIME, news from Salzburg was very scant. Theresa's sudden departure had made it impossible for her to leave an address, and the first answer she received to her letters, after months of waiting, was as hastily written as her own parting note had been. In the beginning of her letter, Frau Fabiani's tone was that of a person who had been slighted, but toward the end, it changed completely, as if mother and daughter had parted on the most friendly terms.

In spite of the fact that Theresa's letters were written discreetly and with utmost reticence, a sympathetic soul would have been able to read her misery between the lines. Her mother seemed to notice nothing of the kind, and even went so far as to write her of her pleasure in Theresa's happiness — though that, which might otherwise have been construed as sarcasm, was in reality nothing more than lack of understanding. Often names were mentioned in these letters that were unknown or wholly uninteresting to Theresa. Of Theresa's father, Frau Fabiani only said that his condition was unimproved; of her brother, not a word, until one day came a card in which she reproached Theresa for her neglect, and expressed the wish that she should look up her brother. It was weeks since Frau Fabiani had heard from him, and she had waited for him in vain during the vacation period.

The address in her hands, Theresa visited her brother late one summer afternoon. She found him in a poor but neatly kept room, the window of which offered no better view than a bare wall with great cracks in it, through which one caught a glimpse of neighbouring fire-escapes.

Karl took it for granted that Theresa had arrived in Vienna a very short time ago, and thought it very wise that she had chosen to become independent. He expressed pity over his father's unimproved condition, which might continue for years. He never even mentioned his mother. He told her further that he was teaching the two sons of a clinical professor four times a week, and was receiving a substantial remuneration. This might, at some future date, prove advantageous to him.

He spoke heatedly of the injustices perpetrated by the University, such as the favoritism shown toward professors' sons by the scholarship committees. He was particularly incensed against the Jews, who were absolutely over-running the University, making life there unbearable.

After a little while, he excused himself, saying that he had an appointment in a coffee-house, where a few of his companions of similar tastes held their club meetings; he, being the secretary, would naturally have to be present.

He escorted Theresa down the stairs and left her with a hasty and casual farewell.

"Let me hear from you soon again," was all he said.

She looked after him as he walked quickly away. His clothes were neat, though carelessly worn; he seemed to have grown older; in fact, his appearance had altered so much that she felt a complete stranger to him.

Theresa had expected more of this visit. She made her way homeward, more dejected and lonely than she had ever been before.

XXV



FOR SOME WEEKS now, Theresa had had charge of the five-year-old son of a travelling man. She rarely saw the father, who was a soured, embittered little man, while his wife treated Theresa with a casual friendliness. The boy, a pretty, blond child, soon endeared himself to her. She hoped sincerely that she might find a certain degree of permanency in this house.

Arriving home, one Sunday evening, a little earlier than usual, she found her charge already in bed. From a neighbouring room came whispered voices. After a while, the mistress stepped out of the room, clad only in a dressing gown. She was confused and irritated. She requested Theresa to buy some cold cuts at a nearby store. When Theresa returned, the mistress, carefully dressed, was seated on the baby's bed, showing the child a picture book. She addressed Theresa gaily, appeared quite at ease, and talked about many matters pertaining to the household. The next day, she seized some trifling pretext to discharge her.

Again Theresa was homeless. For the first time, she thought of returning to Salzburg; but alas! she did not have enough money for the fare. She betook herself, as she always did in the interims between positions, to the suburban home of the widow Kausick. Here she slept in a dingy little room with Frau Kausick and her two children. The house reeked of petroleum and rancid fat. At three o'clock in the morning, the noises in the courtyard, of creaking wagon wheels, neighing horses, and loud, raucous male voices would awaken her out of her sleep. She thought of the hours of quiet, gradual awakening that she had been accustomed to at home, and was seized with panic at the depths of her descent. For the first time, she weighed the possibilities of taking advantage of her youth and beauty, as so many others were doing, and selling her body.

The other possibility, of being loved and happy again, had not entered her mind since her first great disappointment. The advances, within the last few months, of employers, clerks, and the like, had not been sufficiently alluring to betray her into another adventure.

And so her poor, tired, and disappointed soul hoped to find in prostitution the cleanest and most decent form of love. She decided to give herself another week. If, within that time, she still had no position, then nothing would be left — or so it seemed to her, in this dreary morning hour — but to walk the streets.

XXVI



THE WIDOW KAUSICK earned her meagre livelihood as a servant. Though often ill-humoured, she was withal a good-hearted person. She was wont to arise at five o'clock in the morning. A little later, the children began to disturb the dreary unrest which ushered in the day in this poor household. Then Theresa was forced out of bed.

She drank her coffee out of a cracked white cup. After breakfast, she escorted Frau Kausick's children, a boy of nine and a girl of eight, to school. The children were very much attached to Theresa.

An hour's walk through Stadtpark, blooming with early summer flowers, seemed somewhat to lift her spirits.

She entered an employment bureau, where she was treated with little friendliness, in consequence of her inability to remain in one position for any length of time. Despite this, she was given several addresses.

The first attempts were unsuccessful.

About midday, when her hopes were at low ebb, she mounted the stairs of a beautiful apartment house in the Ringstrasse, where a governess was needed for two girls, one thirteen and the other eleven years old.

The lady of the house, a pretty woman, although somewhat too heavily rouged, was about to leave the house, and therefore was at first inclined to be a little impatient at this delay. Nevertheless, she permitted Theresa to enter, and demanded her references. Theresa, following a sudden impulse, replied that she had none to offer, since this was the first time she had applied for employment.

The lady was a little hesitant, but, after talking to her for a short time, she found her appealing, and was particularly impressed by the fact that Theresa's father was an officer. Finally, she decided that it would be better if Theresa could come again on the morrow, when the girls were home from school. In the corridor, Theresa read the following sign, inscribed in gold lettering on a black background: "Dr. Gustav Eppich, Attorney at Law. Criminal Cases."

The next day, at one o'clock, Theresa entered the salon, where she found the lady of the house, in the company of her daughters. The friendly manner in which the two well-bred children greeted her led Theresa to suppose that their mother had influenced them favourably in her behalf. Soon afterwards, the head of the family came in. He remarked, in a lightly reproachful tone, that his wife's summons had obliged him to leave his office earlier than was his habit. He, too, seemed impressed with Theresa, especially since she came of an officer's family. This circumstance had not failed to have its effect upon both the heads of the house.

In answer to a question, Theresa replied that her father had died a few years before, through grief at having been pensioned off prematurely. Over the features of the entire Eppich family there played an expression of sympathy. Although the salary offered was less than she had expected, Theresa could hardly restrain her joy when informed that she was to report for duty on the following day.

At Frau Kausick's house she found a letter from her mother, informing her of her father's death. She had to repress a little shiver, almost a sentiment of guilt, before she became conscious of her grief.

Following the impulses of her sorrow, she made her way to her brother's house. He had not yet heard of their loss, and, when told, did not take it much to heart. He paced the room in silence, then stood still in front of Theresa, who was seated on the bed, since both chairs were littered with books. Suddenly he bent forward and kissed her on the brow, as though he were fulfilling a duty.

"Did you hear anything else from home?" he asked.

Theresa told him the little she knew; among other things, that their mother had sold all the furniture, and was now living in a furnished room.

“Sold the furniture!” exclaimed Karl, with a wry smile. “She might have consulted us first.”

Then, seeing the look of amazement in Theresa’s face, he added:

“After all, we are part owners, and justly entitled to our share!”

“Quite right,” said Theresa. “She mentioned something about that in her letter. We are to receive a certain percentage in a short time.”

“A certain... hmm! I shall have to look into this matter more carefully!”

He began to pace up and down again and, with a quick glance at Theresa remarked:

“Poor father gave up at last!”

Theresa did not know what to reply to this. Feeling very much more ill at ease than she was willing to admit to herself, she took leave of her brother, without telling him of her new position. Karl made no move to restrain her.

On her way home, she entered a church and spent some time there without praying, thinking piously of the departed one. He appeared in her mind’s eye as he was when she was a child, when she had loved him dearly. She recalled the boisterous gaiety with which he used to step into the room, lift her from the floor where she had been playing, press her close to him, and fondle her. To this image was added the image of her mother as she was then — bright, young, almost beaming. This was mere illusion, for, in reality, she had never seen her thus.

Again she felt a shudder pass through her. How could two people change so completely within such a short time?

It seemed to her as if they were both dead and long since buried, and that there was absolutely nothing in common between the late insane Lieutenant and the mean, weirdly aging authoress in Salzburg.

XXVII

THE NEXT DAY, Theresa took up her new duties. At their first dinner together, they made a polite effort to help Theresa to overcome her confusion. The son of the house was also present. His name was George. They pronounced it in the French manner. He was enrolled in the University as a law student.

A schedule for Theresa was arranged. Both girls attended school and were escorted there and back by Theresa. She helped them with their home-work. Frau Eppich was particularly anxious that the girls should take their daily walk. The attitude of both parents continued to be friendly, though Theresa could not long remain in ignorance of the complete indifference with which they regarded her.

They made it easy for her to join in the conversation at table. Often political subjects were discussed. Dr. Eppich held very liberal ideas, which no one but his son dared oppose. George accused his father of being entirely too idealistic. Dr. Eppich heard this with evident pleasure; in fact, he was obviously flattered by the rebuke.

As for Frau Eppich, there were days in which she showed not the slightest interest in her daughters or in any household matters. Then, without warning, she would appear at an unexpected moment and give scrupulous orders for the most insignificant details.

George found many more excuses to take him to his sisters' room than was absolutely necessary. His glances, at times shy, then again bold, betrayed to Theresa his desire to be near her. Perhaps he had hopes, but Theresa was very cold and reticent, and pretended to notice nothing.

The elder of the two girls was inclined to attach herself to Theresa. Sometimes she almost yielded to an impulse to confide in her; but whenever this occurred, she purposely became more reserved and distant during the following days. The younger one was of an even-tempered, still very childish disposition. Both daughters clung affectionately to their mother, although Theresa noticed that the latter was abstracted and often impatient in her responses.

Theresa had very little leisure. True, she had every alternate Sunday free, but she scarcely knew how to take advantage of these hours of liberty. She walked much, without deriving any pleasure from that recreation, and visited the theatre on exceedingly infrequent occasions.

Theresa had no complaints to make toward the family, as far as their behaviour to herself was concerned, though she was aware of a growing unrest, almost a feeling of uncertainty, which she could not account for, except by the strange change in the Eppich family's attitude and spirit toward each other. Unwittingly, she seemed drawn into this inexplicable conflict.

There was not a soul in whom she could — or, for that matter, wished to — confide. Only a French governess who did not strike Theresa as being so very young, though she was not yet thirty, was somewhat more sympathetic to her. Theresa had seized the opportunity of her acquaintance with this woman to practice French conversation.

Sylvia was amusing. She told Theresa little stories of her past — she was not altogether discreet — and tried to encourage Theresa to similar confidences. Being of a very reticent nature, Theresa related no more than she would have told an utter stranger, though it was clearly apparent all the while that Sylvia was not in the least convinced of her innocence.

Theresa wondered at times how it was possible that her heart — indeed, her very senses — scarcely remembered the delight she had experienced in the Lieutenant's arms. She no longer suffered over his

betrayal. Yet she was certain that she could never again repose her trust in a man, and she was glad of it. She flattered herself that she enjoyed a good reputation; and Frau Eppich, whenever the occasion arose, boasted to her friends of Theresa's antecedents.

XXVIII

SPRING HAD COME. Early one afternoon, during the Easter holidays, Theresa was at the Stefansplatz, awaiting a governess employed by friends of the Eppich family — a good-hearted, somewhat faded creature, for whom Theresa felt more pity than friendliness. The Fraulein was late. Theresa amused herself by watching the passersby. They all seemed free of worries on this lovely, mild holiday, and all bent toward some happy goal. There was no dearth of lovers. Theresa, without envy, found it ridiculous that instead of a lover, she should be waiting for an old governess with whom she had nothing more in common than a similarity of profession. She was slightly irritated at the prospect of the tiresome afternoon which she would have to spend in her company.

Since it was a half-hour past the appointed time, she decided to proceed alone. Once more, through a feeling of conscientiousness, she looked round on all sides to see if the Fraulein might be coming; then, almost hastily, she left the place and mingled with the stream of walkers. She was glad to be free and alone, happy in the uncertainty of what the next hour would bring forth.

It happened that she was shoved along with the crowd towards the Prater, and soon found herself in the Hauptallee. The earth smelled of the spring, though the trees that lined both sides of the Allee were still in their winter bareness.

The driveway was alive with cabs and carriages. People were returning from the races at Freudeau. Like many others, Theresa stood on the curb for a while. Many glances rested on her, and many men turned to look at her again. One in particular was a young officer who resembled Max, though he appeared to her much more elegant than her seducer. She knew now that she had simply thrown herself away then, and she was determined to be more wise in the future.

She walked along the crowded Allee until she came to the bandstand, where music was played for the general public and not merely for the guests in the overflowing restaurant gardens. Thousands passed by, paused, pressed forward. Theresa was happy. She enjoyed the way the different instruments took up the theme — the quiet start, the sudden swelling of the drums, the tinkling tones of the bells — all this delighted her. The tramp of horses, the whistle of locomotives, the chatter and laughter of the throng — everything seemed to join in this spring festival concert.

Her dark, unpretentious clothes and habitually grave mien were not conducive to advances. Only when she stood for a while near the fence of the restaurant garden did a young man press close to her. She made a repelling gesture with her hand, and he quickly disappeared, before she was even able to discern his features.

As she walked under the still leafless trees, away from the noise and the music, she recalled his touch, which had doubtless been premeditated, with little or no resentment. Quickly, almost like a person in flight, she went on. Gradually the crowds began to disperse, and Theresa decided to rest on the first unoccupied' bench which she could find.

A young man walked past her. His appearance had struck her from afar — a lean, haggard figure, dressed in a ridiculously bright suit, well-pressed, but ill-fitting. Both hands were in his pockets, and he danced along rather than walked. Between two fingers, he dangled a soft brown hat.

He looked at Theresa with a childish, timid glance. Without being too audacious, he nodded and smiled in a friendly manner, so that Theresa, in spite of herself, returned his smile. He took a few steps forward, then suddenly turned, walked toward her, and seated himself beside her. She attempted to rise, but he had already

begun to talk, entirely oblivious of her gesture. He spoke of the delightful spring weather, the races which he had just attended, the fall of a jockey, and joked about an ostentatiously dressed couple who chanced to be passing by at that moment. Finally, he asked Theresa if she had noticed the carriage of the Erzherzogin Josef a and that of the Baron Springer go by? Was it not nice to listen to music from a distance? It came to one as though from another world.

Theresa, confused by this sudden flow of words, answered laconically, yet not unamiably. Then she rose and hastily bowed. But he, too, rose, walked beside her, and continued his chatter.

He tried to guess who she might be. A Viennese? No, never! She smiled. Perhaps a German, since she was so educated! Ah, she was an Italian! Yes, most certainly! The dark hair and glowing, ardent eyes! That's it — an Italian!

Almost frightened, she looked up at him. He laughed. Well, of course, her parents — her grandparents, at least — must have come from the south. She herself was a Viennese. That one could guess from her accent even though she talked very little and, at that, "Hochdeutsch." Was she an actress, a singer, a prima donna, or a noblewoman? Surely a noblewoman, condescending to watch at close range the doings of the people. Goodness knows, she might even be a princess or a duchess! A duchess, of course!

He would not be deprived of that idea; he even pretended to be in earnest about it. Everything seemed to point to it. The unpretentious clothing, the bearing, the walk, the glance! He allowed her to precede him a few paces, the better to admire her bearing and walk.

"Your Highness," he said, suddenly, as they were nearing the bandstand, "I would deem it a great honour to invite Your Highness to supper, but, truth to tell — poverty is no shame and wealth no misfortune! — my fortunes are unfortunately low; about a gulden in all. That would not provide a very handsome meal. So Her Highness would have to pay for her own supper!"

She asked him, laughingly, if he were quite insane?

"Never less so!" he answered, seriously.

She quickened her steps. It was getting late. She had better be on her way home. Well, surely she would permit him at least to escort her to the court equipage that was waiting for her somewhere nearby. At the Schweitzerhaus or the Preussischen Museum? Or perhaps near the Viaduct?

In the meantime, they had arrived at a little lane. Behind green hedges, in a modest restaurant, some people were enjoying the music that floated from a distant cafe, while regaling themselves with cheese, salami, and beer. And soon, to Theresa's astonishment, she found herself seated with her escort at a rather rickety table covered with a red-flowered cloth. Both ate heartily of whatever the frock-coated, over-heated waiter placed before them.

Theresa's escort talked to him as though he were an old friend, and put all sorts of jesting questions to him.

"Oh, Herr Swoboda, how is your grandfather? Still a fortune-teller? And your daughter? Still the legless wonder?"

Then he surpassed himself in comic excuses for having dared to bring a princess to such an impossible place. Of course, here her incognito was far less likely to be discovered. Afterwards, he called her attention to the various people round them. That man in the dark coat, with his stiff hat brought low over his forehead — surely he was a defrauder, fleeing from justice! He had something to say of each individual — of the two soldiers who drank beer out of the same glasses as their sweethearts; the man with the protruding eyes, with his fat wife and four children; and the ancient, smooth-shaven gentleman who sat under the lantern and talked to himself. At last, with well simulated fright, he discovered, in a remote corner of the garden, a man wearing a black suit and high hat, who he insisted was a private detective, come to watch over the princess.

These trivialities were not in the least droll, and Theresa was fully aware of this. But after all these depressing months of conventional respectability in which no one had ever uttered a harmless joke in her presence, a tremendous yearning for fun and laughter was taking possession of Theresa. Sitting beside this man whom she had known for less than an hour, she felt free and happy. Her excitement heightened by two glasses of wine, she relinquished the restraint in which she had thus far held herself, and laughed merrily.

In her mind, she was trying to determine what manner of man her escort might be; whether a painter, or perhaps an actor. Well, what matter, after all? He was young and unrepressed. Surely, it was jollier today than when she had accompanied Alfred to the elegant Hotelgarten!

He had been in the Tyrol, in Italy, in Spain, and in Malta. Had she not yet guessed that he was a peddler, who travelled through the world with a pack on his back? He had arrived only yesterday, and was ready to start again tomorrow. But, of course, if he might hope to see Her Highness again, he would willingly sacrifice a few days — and nights, even, he added, casually.

They each paid their own check, then left the garden. The stranger took Theresa's arm and would not release it. The festivities were gradually drawing to an end. They made their way between booths, shooting galleries, restaurants, and games of chance, toward the exit. A barker who spoke in the Bohemian dialect tried to inveigle them to patronize the magic cabinet, promising them many surprises. To the evident enjoyment of the crowd, Theresa's escort entered into a conversation with the barker, imitating his dialect to perfection.

This displeased Theresa. She freed her arm, and started to leave; but there he was again beside her. He stood by the wagonstand and pretended to be disconsolate at not finding the court carriage there.

"Now the joke is ended," said Theresa, "and I think it best we bid each other farewell!"

"Well, if the joke is over," he said, with unexpected seriousness, "then it is only proper for me to present myself with due formality — Kasimir Tobisch! — Formerly," he added, ironically, "von Tobisch."

"But," he explained, "there is no sense in insisting upon the title, when one is nothing more than a poor wretch. And now Her Highness might guess what my profession is."

"A painter," she answered, without much thought. He nodded quickly. That was right. He was a painter, and a musician, upon occasion. Would she not visit his studio, some time? As she made no reply, he began talking again of his travels. He had been a musician and a painter, not only in Italy, but also in Paris, Madrid, and England.

He played nearly all instruments, from the flute to the kettle-drums. Ah, what a city, Madrid — mysterious and romantic! But Rome surpassed them all! The catacombs, for instance — a thousand skeletons and deaths' heads deep underground: it was eerie walking round down there. If one got lost in that maze, there was absolutely no hope.

It had happened once to a friend of his, but he was saved.

And the Colosseum — a giant circle, in which a hundred thousand people could be seated. Now it is in ruins, and the moon shines over it. Only at night, of course!

They were nearing the house in which Theresa lived.

She begged him to leave her, and, upon his insistence, gave him her name and address. She also promised to meet him two weeks later, at an appointed hour and place. She noticed that he followed her at a distance and watched her from the corner until she disappeared in the doorway. Suspicion? It might just as well be infatuation.

XXIX

DURING THE NEXT fourteen days, she received three letters from him. The first was formal and gallant; the second, a hit more sprightly. He called Theresa "Princess" and "Your Highness," and inscribed himself Kasimir, the great drummer, flutist, and journeyman. The third letter, however, held a touch of tenderness, and, as though carelessly, he signed his initials, "C. v. T."

They met each other as pre-arranged on the Praterstern. The rain was pouring down. Kasimir came without an umbrella, cloaked in the romantic folds of a travelling coat. He had tickets for the afternoon performance at the Karlstheater. Oh, he hadn't paid for them! He knew the director well, and some of the actors. He met them occasionally in restaurants and at studio parties. Well, one should not take that word, "party," too literally. Still, they had some jolly times together, although things were never as lively as similar gatherings which he had attended in Paris; at least they were not as abandoned. There they held artists' balls at which the models danced entirely nude or, what was even worse, covered with transparent veils.

Thus he entertained her on the way to the theatre. They sat in the second row of the third gallery. The production, an operetta, was neither better nor worse than many others which Theresa had seen in Salzburg. The play was quite amusing, and Kasimir's whispered comments on it made her laugh and blush in turn. When the darkened hall emboldened him to become too familiar, she had forbidden his caresses.

He changed immediately, remaining decent and quiet in his seat until the end of the play. He did not even answer her questions, although that was only another manner of clowning.

It was light and still raining when they stepped out into the street. They entered a nearby coffee house and sat on a window-seat. Theresa gazed absently at the illustrated papers, while Kasimir interested himself in a game of billiards, gave the players advice, and even tried a few strokes without much luck. He blamed this on the faulty cue.

Theresa found it strange that he should pay so little attention to her. When finally he did return it was already time to leave. He helped her into her jacket, threw his own coat about his shoulders, opened and held the umbrella over her, but did not attempt to take her arm.

He was reticent, almost melancholy; and she pitied him. As they passed a well-lit restaurant, his features assumed such a hungry look, that Theresa was almost impelled to invite him to supper. Yet, she feared to offend him; and perhaps she was still more afraid that he might accept.

They walked along silently. While taking leave of each other on a street corner, he declared suddenly, with some passion, that he could not possibly wait fourteen days before seeing her again. She shrugged her shoulders. It could not be helped. He insisted. She was a slave. Why should they not see each other for an hour, some day this week? Of course she was not a slave, she replied, but she held a position which entailed certain duties.

Duties! Toward whom? Strange people, who took advantage of her? That was no better than actual slavery. No, under no conditions would he wait fourteen days! Surely they would not refuse her an occasional evening off during the week! Although she remained outwardly firm, she thought that he was right.

The next evening he sent her a little note, saying that he had something of importance to talk over with her, and would wait for her on the corner. The lady of the house was present, and saw Theresa blush. There was no answer, Theresa informed the messenger. She did not hear from Kasimir again until the day of their rendezvous.

XXX



THERESA WAITED AT the entrance to the Stadtpark. Opposite her, in a café on the Ringstrasse, the guests sat in the open and sunned themselves. A pale child offered violets for sale. Theresa took a small bouquet. A passerby whispered something in her ear; an insulting invitation, couched in shameless words. She did not dare turn round. She blushed a deep red, and not entirely from anger. Was she not mad to live like a slave, like a nun? How everybody gazed at her! Some turned to look again. One handsome, elegant man walked by her several times, evidently wondering how long she would remain alone. Perhaps it was just as well that Kasimir did not come. A poor devil and a fool, to boot — and why, of all men, he? She could take her choice of men!

There he was, now, in his light summer suit, not of the latest cut, yet rather becoming; his soft hat in his hand, as usual, and the other hand in his pocket. His stride was free and easy. He kissed her hand. They wandered through the park, arm in arm, stood near the lake, and watched the children feed the swans. Kasimir told her of an experience on a lake in a park in Paris, where he had wandered about happily all the evening, and then had passed the night in the shadow of a beautifully fashioned rock. "Surely not alone," said she. He placed his hand over his heart. "I can't remember any more. A thing of the past!"

Theresa wanted to hear no more of Paris, Rome, or any other foreign city. If he yearned so much for them, why did he not go back?

He pressed her arm firmly against his own, and invited her to have tea with him on the terrace of the Kursalon.

They seated themselves at a small table, and Theresa was suddenly overcome with a ridiculous fear that some one might see her there with Kasimir and inform her employers.

As these thoughts passed through her mind, she involuntarily bowed her head; and Kasimir, who sat very formally, with legs crossed, smoking a cigarette, confronted her with precisely what was going on within her mind. She shook her head slowly, on the verge of tears.

"Poor child!" said Kasimir; and, with determination, he added: "all that will be remedied!"

He called the waiter and paid him, allowing the money to clink a little ridiculously on the marble top of the table. Then they descended the wide stairs into the park. He told her how much he had yearned for her. Only when working could he find any peace. He spoke of a fantastic landscape which he was painting, a sort of "tropical Utopia," and of others that he carried in his imagination, pictures of home.

Of home?

Yes, strange as it might seem, he, too, had a home. And he talked of the little German-Bohemian city in which he was born; of his mother, the widow of a notary, who still lived there; of the flower beds in the front garden where he had played as a child.

In turn, Theresa described her family. Her father had shot himself through offended pride; her mother wrote for the newspapers under an assumed name; her brother was a University student. And she herself — yes, why not admit it? — had been engaged to an officer whose parents had refused to consent to his marriage with a poor girl — but she would rather not speak of that; the memory of it was too sad. Kasimir did not press her.

They promenaded through streets that were unfamiliar to Theresa. She thought of her childish dreams — of losing herself in strange paths and, suddenly, when least expected, returning home.

“Well, here we are!” said Kasimir simply.

She looked up. They stood before an apartment house, exactly similar to a hundred others. He took her arm and together they entered the house, walked up the stairs, past doors with brass plates and others with calling cards tacked on them, past hall windows in back of which shadows flitted to and fro, and at last reached the top floor. Kasimir opened the door with a key that screeched in the lock. In the large foyer stood a laundry bag. The walls were almost bare. On one wall hung a large calendar. Through still another door, they entered the studio.

The tremendous window was three quarters covered with a dark green curtain, so that on one side it was day, and on the other side, almost night. In the darkness stood a big easel. On it rested a picture, hidden by a dirty cloth. On an old wardrobe were some books. A paint-smeared palette lay on a long box beside a blue velvet cloak. On the floor were several half-filled gloomy looking bottles. The room reeked of turpentine, leather shoes, and a sweet-scented perfume.

Kasimir threw his hat boldly in a corner, came up to Theresa, took her head in both his hands, looked into her eyes, put his arm around her, and drew her upon his knee as he sank into the armchair. She screamed a little, for it seemed to her that one leg of the armchair was about to give way. He reassured her; then he began to kiss her, almost deliberately. His moustache smelled of pomade, exactly like a barber shop where she had once gone to fetch her father. His lips were moist and cool.

XXXI

IN ORDER TO see Kasimir more often than once in two weeks, Theresa had to resort to various excuses. Once she said that she was going to a theatre with a girl friend; another time, there was a meeting with her brother which could not be postponed. Since she performed her duties as governess conscientiously, these trifling irregularities were passed over rather lightly.

Kasimir's friend, with whom he shared the studio, according to his story, had returned unexpectedly from a trip, which made it impossible for them to continue there. So the lovers, to remain undisturbed, were forced to take a room in a third-rate hotel, for which the rent was paid by Theresa when Kasimir's funds ran low. She did not mind this. In fact, it gave her a certain satisfaction. Of course, his constant financial troubles were responsible for his frequent ill-humour; once, without evident reason, he spoke to her very harshly. But when she, unaccustomed to this tone, silently left his side, quickly dressed herself, and was about to leave, he threw himself on his knees before her and begged her forgiveness — a grace which she knew she was only too ready to accord him.

During the first days of July, the attorney's family was to move to Ischl, there to spend the summer months. Theresa wished to change her position, so as to remain near Kasimir. He himself advised her against this, and promised to visit her. He might even be venturesome enough to rent a room at a nearby farmhouse, so that they might soon be together again.

On the last Sunday before the family were to move, Theresa and Kasimir took a little excursion into the Wienerwald. Late that afternoon, they sat in a restaurant garden situated on a lawn, surrounded on all sides by swaying trees. Around the tables, people were drinking, singing, and laughing. Children were running to and fro. In the house, by an open window, a fat man in his shirt sleeves was playing a harmonica.

Today, Kasimir had money, and he deprived neither himself nor Theresa of anything. Near them sat a young married couple with two children. Kasimir began a conversation with the parents. He praised the exquisite view of the Danube, drank their health, and poured the "Weinerl" to his taste. He talked of all the delicious outlandish wines he had drunk during his travels; of Veltliner, Sankta Maura, Lacrimae Christi, and of the Xeres de la Frontera. He related stories of intoxications which he had witnessed. Then, to the amusement of the company, he imitated the contortions of a drunkard, and finally sang a comic song, to the accompaniment of the harmonica. Everybody applauded, and Kasimir bowed his thanks.

Theresa felt herself growing more and more melancholy. If she were to disappear, would he even notice it? And if she were suddenly to go out of his life, would he miss her, think about her? Frightened by her sudden insight into reality, she wondered if it would not have been better to have told him on the way of certain fears which she believed she had reason to feel, and which would also be of importance to him. Now she could not bring herself to impart such news. And why should she? Tomorrow might prove her apprehensions premature.

The sun had long since gone down. The forest stood in darkness. Night was falling gently. Several students, in red caps, marched by. Theresa looked involuntarily to see if her brother might be among them. But he did not belong to a "Colour." That, too, had been a lie, like much else that she had told Kasimir. What would Karl say, should her anxieties prove well founded? Ah, what did he care? He cared as little as the others. She did not have to account to anyone except herself.

It was almost dark when she and Kasimir made their way homeward. His arm around her, they walked

down the path along the woods. They ran down an incline and she almost fell, whereupon they laughed like children. He pressed her closer, and she was happy again. All too soon they reached the valley. They wandered through the streets at a brisk pace and rode to the city in a crowded car.

Theresa was again uneasy, but Kasimir was apparently in his element among the mob of tired women, laughing children, and excited men. He joined in the stupid banter exchanged between the passengers, played the gallant, and told a fat man that he must at once relinquish his seat to the charming young lady who had just entered. He passed his cigarettes round to everyone.

Theresa was happy when the trip was over. It was not far to her house. At the door, they arranged a rendezvous for the end of the following week.

Kasimir seemed suddenly to be in haste. He did not even turn round to look after her,

XXXII

THERESA COULD SCARCELY wait until the next meeting. During that interval, she wrote him two loving letters, but received no reply. On Saturday night, an undeniable fear trembled within her, which changed to instant delight as she saw him coming toward her, as young and jaunty as ever.

Why had he not answered her letters? What did she mean by "answered"? He had received no letters. She must have forgotten that he had moved. Moved? Of course! He had told her so. His friend had gone to Munich, and they had had to give up the studio. He was living temporarily in a small room, which was good enough for his purposes.

They had not walked far before they arrived at an old house in a narrow, unlit street, in the centre of the city. They climbed a narrow stairway to the fourth floor. Kasimir opened the apartment door. The hall was in total darkness, save for a small ray of light that gleamed through the keyhole of the kitchen door. The place smelled of gasoline.

They entered the room. Through the window, the outlines of chimneys on the houses opposite were dimly visible. The roof was so close that one could almost reach it with an extended hand. When Theresa looked out over the roofs and chimneys, she could see a large stretch of the street below. A clear view, and a quiet, central location. Perhaps he would take a lease for a year.

"Can one paint here?" asked Theresa.

"Oh, small pictures," he remarked, casually.

Kasimir had not yet lighted the candle, and in the clear moonlight that filled the room, the wardrobe, the narrow bed pushed against the window, and particularly the porcelain oven, looked cozy enough.

Kasimir laid emphasis upon the fact that they were now in one of the oldest houses in Vienna — a former palace. Part of the furniture had once belonged to a Count. Theresa wanted to look into the wardrobe, but Kasimir would not permit it. He had not been able to straighten things out yet, having only moved in that same morning. What, only this morning, yet he had not received her letters at the studio? That was strange, she thought; but she said nothing.

He had a little confession to make to her. He had been obliged to help his friend out of a difficulty, and he had not left himself enough money to provide supper. She handed him her purse, and he rushed out.

She sighed deeply, alone there, in the dark room. Why did he always lie, as though it were a matter of shame to be only a poor devil — and yet he was sometimes almost proud of it. All his lies seemed to turn upon his poverty. She would beg him to confide his troubles to her. Conditions were such that neither he nor she ought to have any secrets from one another. Today she would tell him that she expected a baby.

Kasimir was gone a long time. The thought flashed through her mind that he might never come back. Again she felt an impulse to open the wardrobe; but, unnoticed by her, he had surreptitiously abstracted the key. A small trunk stood under the bed. She pulled it out. It was unlocked. There was nothing in it except a few pieces of well patched underclothing and a frayed necktie. She closed the lid and shoved the trunk back in place. She was deeply moved. Kasimir's poverty cut her to the quick more deeply even than her own misery ever had. She felt more strangely bound to him than ever before, almost as though fate had destined them for one another. Each could help the other to bear his burdens.

As he entered with a little package and a bottle of wine, she threw her arms tempestuously about his neck. He condescendingly indulged her caresses. Whether it was only the wine that made her soul light and

unloosed her tongue, or whether it was this sentiment of kinship which she had never experienced before, she did not know; but suddenly nestling in his arms, she confessed what had been locked in her bosom these many days. He was positive that she was mistaken. They would wait for a time, and then see. He said many things that would have hurt her, had she understood or cared to hear them aright.

When they descended the stairs, everything was as if she had never divulged anything. It was long past midnight when they bid each other goodnight at Theresa's door. Again he was in great haste. Everything was arranged; she knew his address, and he knew hers. Perhaps in a few weeks they would be together again on the green, under the starry heavens.

XXXIII

THE FASHIONABLE VILLA Ischl was situated in a large garden. From the balcony, one could see the bathers and cure-seekers walking up and down the esplanade. The men of the house being still in the city, the spirit of the Eppich household seemed freer; both girls were happier than Theresa had ever seen them. Frau Eppich was more friendly and kind to her than she had ever been in the city.

There were many visitors. An elegant, bald-headed young man, who had frequently dined with the Eppichs in the city, came almost daily. In the evening, he sat with Frau Eppich in the garden. Theresa took long walks with the girls. Occasionally, they were joined by younger and older friends, with their governesses, and now and again by boys and young men. Sometimes they went rowing, and, at home, there were usually harmless parlour games, in which even Theresa took part.

The older girl had become sincerely attached to Theresa, and made her her confidante. They often walked arm in arm apart from the others, and she would confide to her many of her innocent little affairs of the heart.

The beautiful countryside, the summer air, the walks out in the open — all greatly contributed to Theresa's well-being; and since she received a short letter from Kasimir about every other day, her spirit was free from care.

Then, abruptly, the letters ceased. Theresa became terribly excited. Her condition, which was now unmistakable, and which, at times, even delighted her, overwhelmed her suddenly with its seriousness. She sent Kasimir a special delivery letter, in which she spoke unrestrainedly of her anxiety. No word came from him; but, instead, a letter from her mother. Could not Theresa manage to visit her, now that she was only a few hours away? Theresa mentioned the invitation quite casually to Frau Eppich; and, as though they had just been waiting for such an excuse, an immediate visit to Salzburg was arranged.

The next day, Theresa started on her trip, in the company of the Eppichs and of a family acquaintance, with her son and daughter; and in addition, the elegant bald young man. At the station, Theresa left the others and hurried to her mother, who had moved to an airy corner room in a house near their old home. Frau Fabiani received her daughter in a quiet, yet affectionate manner. The strange, uncanny creature of a few years ago had entirely disappeared, and instead, there appeared an old woman.

She was pleased to hear that Theresa was happy. She herself, fortunately, had nothing to complain of. She earned a little more than was necessary for her needs, and as far as being alone was concerned, her work was benefited thereby. She wanted to know all about Theresa's present and former positions. Theresa was somewhat touched by this display of interest. But during dinner, which was ordered from a nearby restaurant, the conversation lapsed and Theresa became uncomfortable. She felt as if she were the guest of some strange, distracted old woman.

While her mother took her afternoon nap, Theresa gazed out of the window into the street. She could see the distant bridge and could almost hear the rushing of the water. She thought of the people with whom she had come to Salzburg; at that very moment, they were probably dining at the hotel. She thought of Max, of Alfred, and finally, of that strangest of strangers, Kasimir, whose child she was carrying, and who had not answered her last letters. Were he even less a stranger, he could not help her. With of without his love, she was alone.

Without disturbing her mother, she slipped quietly away, and wandered through city streets that were deserted on this hot, summer afternoon. At first, she felt inclined to visit those places which held memories

for her; but these memories had lost their glamour.

Almost mechanically, she walked to the hotel where her travelling companions were stopping; they, however, had gone on a little excursion. Theresa sat in the cool lobby and glanced through the illustrated periodicals. Her eye happening to fall upon the writing room, she thought of once more sending a letter to Kasimir. She wrote to him in words of the warmest tenderness, intended to awaken anew within him the memories of the delights which they had enjoyed in common. She painted for him an alluring picture of the possibility of a meeting at night in the garden of the villa, and purposely refrained from all mention of that which was now so gravely troubling her.

She felt a certain relief when she had finished the letter. There remained nothing for her to do but return to her mother's room. Frau Fabiani was already at her work. Theresa took a book from the shelf, the nearest one at hand. It happened to be a detective story, which held her fascinated until far into the evening.

At last, her mother put aside her work and invited Theresa to walk with her. Silently, the two women strolled in the cool evening air, along the river bank; and later turned in at a modest, seldom-frequented restaurant. Frau Fabiani was treated as an habitué, and, to Theresa's surprise, drank three glasses of beer.

For the night, Theresa had to make herself as comfortable as she could on the couch. She awoke much cramped. Although there was still plenty of time before she would be required to meet the others at the station, she soon took leave of her mother, who was sleeping in a curtained alcove. She was much relieved when she found herself outside.

The morning was clear and bright. Theresa sat in the Mirabel gardens, amid the colours and odours of thousands of flowers. Two young girls, former schoolmates, passed by. They did not recognize her at first, but soon turned round and greeted her. Then they questioned one another. There: a told them that she was a companion in a refined Viennese home, and had just come in to visit her mother. She wanted to know all the news of the city. But since she did not dare to ask about Max or Alfred, she heard only small-town gossip, which did not interest her. Though of the same age as her two former schoolmates, she felt years older than they. She had nothing more in common with them or with this city, and she was glad when, an hour later, the little company assembled at the station, ready to leave.

XXXIV



THE NEXT DAY, at Villa Ischl, Theresa waited feverishly for news from Kasimir. It was in vain. Her agitated condition was beginning to be noticed. It was clear to her that something would have to be done. At least, she must talk to some one. In whom should she confide? She felt nearest to the fifteen-year-old Bertha, who fell in love with a different man every day. At night, before going to bed, she would cry out her heart on Theresa's bosom. This child seemed closer to her than any one, at that moment; she would understand and comfort her. But soon she saw the stupidity of the idea, and so remained silent.

Among the governesses and companions whom she had met during the summer, there was not one toward whom she felt inclined in friendship. They, too, may have had their own personal experiences; yet, she feared ridicule, indiscretion and betrayal. Naturally, she knew that there were ways and means to help her out of difficulty. She knew also that, this could not be accomplished without danger. One might be sent to jail, become ill, or even die. She recalled a half-forgotten story of a similar nature that had ended tragically.

She gave herself a respite of eight days more in which to await news from Kasimir. During this time, the distractions of country life kept her comparatively calm. When the eight days had elapsed, she pleaded for a leave of three days. She had some very important matters to discuss with her brother regarding the inheritance left them by their father. The leave was granted without question.

XXXV

THERESA ARRIVED IN Vienna at noon. She went directly to Kasimir's rooming house, and ran quickly up the stairs. An old woman opened the door. Herr Kasimir Tobisch did not live here; in fact, no one of that name had ever lived here. A few weeks ago, a man had rented the room and paid a small deposit, but he had disappeared the very next day, without leaving any clue of his present whereabouts.

Theresa was downcast and ashamed. Through the superintendent, she learned that a few letters addressed to Kasimir Tobisch had been received at that house, but that only one had been called for. Theresa saw her own handwriting staring her in the face. She begged to be allowed to take the letters. The superintendent refused to give them to her. Theresa blushed to the roots of her hair, and withdrew.

She then proceeded to the studio in which Kasimir had formerly lived. Here the name of Kasimir Tobisch was entirely unknown. Perhaps the two artists occupying the room at present might know something about him. Theresa hurried upstairs. An elderly person in a paint-besmeared smock opened the door. He knew nothing of a man named Kasimir Tobisch. The former tenant had been a Rumanlan, who had left without paying his rent. Theresa stammered thanks for the information. In the artist's eyes there glowed something akin to pity. She felt his glance follow her as she descended the stairs.

Now she stood forlorn in the street. In spite of everything, she could not believe that Kasimir had left Vienna. Fortunately, she was not obliged to return immediately. She could walk the streets a few days, until she found him. Though inwardly aware of the futility and ridiculousness of her efforts, she nevertheless walked for hours, hither and thither, back and forth, until, at last, hunger and fatigue drove her into a restaurant. She sat alone in the unprepossessing room, this being much later than the usual dinner hour. While waiting for the meal to be served, she sat feverishly counting the tables, over and over again, from those in the daylight near the window to those placed in the darkest niches of the room. The restaurant in which she now sat was the dining-room of a second-rate hotel. She decided to engage quarters there.

In her room, she washed away the dust of her journey. Evening was still far distant. She looked out of her fourth floor window into the dusty street. The inimical, monotonous noises of the city reached her even there. If Kasimir were to pass, would she have time to rush down the stairs and reach him? Would she be able to recognize him at all from such a distance? The faces all seemed to fade into nothingness. Perhaps he was passing at this very moment, and she did not know it! She leaned out of the window until she became dizzy. She drew back and seated herself at the table. The noises of the street receded.

Her loneliness, her complete detachment, and the consciousness that, at this moment, no one knew of her whereabouts, gave her, for a time, a strange feeling of calm, almost of well-being. Why had she been so restless during these past days and weeks, as though she were actually threatened by some palpable danger? What had she to fear? To whom did she owe an accounting? To her mother? Or to her brother? They certainly had never troubled themselves about her. To her employers, who paid her for her services and would, whenever it pleased them, dismiss her like a stranger? What did these people matter to her?

When last in Salzburg, she had learned from her mother that her inheritance was somewhat larger than she had imagined. With that, she could surely manage for a few months, and therefore would not be a burden to any one. Perhaps, after all, it was best for all concerned that she had not met and would have nothing more to do with Kasimir. Who knows? He might even have been capable of extorting those few gulden from her that were to tide her over her difficult period.

Why had she come to Vienna? What did she want of him? Ah, why question? She knew only too well. She wanted him — his kisses, his caresses. And then again, after a short time of peace, she became despondent. It was for his sake that she had come to Vienna — hoping, yearning, yet filled with anxiety lest she find him not. Now she knew without a doubt that he was gone. He had simply fled, so as to avoid all responsibilities and all unpleasantness.

Was that not stupid of him? Did he not realize that she would never have made any demands upon him? Why had she not told him? He had no duties toward her. She had not been an innocent, inexperienced girl when she gave herself to him. And she always knew that he was a poor wretch. She would never have required anything of him. And the child? Well, that was her affair — hers, alone!

The room had grown quite dark. Outside, the city was covered by a dismal light. What now? Should she go out into the street? Wander aimlessly about? And then the night, and morning! She could not possibly meet him accidentally, even if he were still in the city. She had nothing more to do here. Almost with a feeling of relief, she determined to return to Ischl at once. She paid her bill, ran down the stairs, and took a cab to the station. When at last she had settled herself in a compartment, she instantly fell into a deep sleep, from which she did not awaken until the train was within fifteen minutes of her destination.

XXXVI

THERESA WAS TREATED with great consideration by the Eppich household. Even the guests were polite to her, almost as though she were a poorer yet entirely worthy member of the family. A young, unprepossessing lawyer, quite myopic and of a delicate, sickly appearance, paid her marked attention. He spoke to her of his sad youth, his studies, and his experiences as a teacher. She felt that he was somewhat overrating her; yes, mistaking her for a person entirely remote from what she actually was.

She, upon her part, told him many things — about her parents, her brother, and about Alfred, her first love; all in the slightly casual and often untruthful manner to which she had lately become accustomed. She was completely silent about Max, and related her adventure with Kasimir as though it had been most harmless — just a few friendly walks.

On the last day of his stay, while in the woods, the two lagged behind the rest of the company. With a very clumsy gesture, the young lawyer attempted to embrace her. She pushed him back vehemently; then, forgave him, and gave him permission to write to her. She never heard from him again. Toward the end of August, young Herr Eppich arrived. His sisters, who did not get on very well with him, were nevertheless happy to see him, and all their girl friends promptly fell in love with him. According to the current style, he had shaved his moustache, and every one found that he resembled a certain famous actor and matinee idol.

At first, he was very reticent with Theresa. One day, on the stairs, he jestingly refused to allow her to pass, and she did not resist him as strongly as she had intended to. When she had entered her room, she locked the door after her. She looked out of the window and saw the young gentleman step out into the garden, a cigarette between his lips, without so much as a backward glance.

Dr. Eppich had come for two days. Something unpleasant seemed to have happened between his wife and himself. Every one noticed it. He left without making his farewells. The younger daughter cried much during the next few days. It was quite apparent to Theresa that this twelve-year-old knew more about the matters then going on, and felt them more deeply, than any of the others.

One night, Theresa started up in fright. She had heard a noise at her door. The thought came to her that George was trying to gain entrance to her room. Instead of fear, she felt a pleasurable excitement; and when all remained still after that, she was frankly disappointed. That which had flashed through her mind many times since that day on the stairs, was becoming a sort of plan during the sleepless night. She felt that in George she might assure her child of a father. Of course, it was high time for her to look for one. But as if the young man had divined her intentions, he kept aloof and distant. Theresa was at first surprised at his reticence, but during the course of the next few days, she discovered that he was carrying on an intrigue with a young woman who frequented the house.

She was by no means jealous. Her anger with herself soon changed to shame. She felt deserted. And more and more, she was conscious of the distressing nature of her condition and the danger of her situation. Above all, the thought of meeting her brother filled her with an almost ridiculous panic. At the same time, she was certain that most of the women she knew, and in particular, those of her profession, had gone through similar experiences and had known how to procure help for themselves. One could not ask outright, but surely, one might turn the conversation in such a manner as to learn something useful.

Among the nursemaids and governesses of her acquaintance, there were only two with whom she occasionally conversed in a lighter vein, without, however, touching upon any really delicate themes. One

was a thin, pale, faded, and seemingly sweet person, who chattered, not only of the family in which she was employed, but of every one she knew, in the most acrimonious manner. She was addressed as Fraulein, though it was known that she was either a widow or a divorcée.

The other was a brunette, not yet thirty, and a girl of exceptionally pleasant qualities. Many amours were attributed to her, though not one had ever been proven against her. This was the person, Theresa thought, best able to advise her. While walking with her one drizzly afternoon in the middle of September, their charges some little distance ahead of them, she began, in a rather clumsy fashion, to talk of the many children in the Bank Director's house where Fraulein Rosa was employed. But since she hesitated to put a direct question to her, she learned nothing that she did not already know... namely, that there were obliging women, and also doctors, to whom one might resort in such emergencies, and that the attendant dangers were not at all too great.

This superficial information had the effect of calming Theresa. The light, careless manner in which the other treated the entire subject, convinced her that that which had appeared obnoxious and dangerous was in reality not so difficult, if it were not indeed to be regarded merely as a matter of routine. It was an accident that occurred in the lives of many women, and left no further traces. For her, too, it should mean nothing more serious than that.

XXXVII

AUTUMN HAD COME, and the family moved back to the city. Theresa scanned the papers, not for advertisements of positions, but for other information which might prove more useful to her in her present exigency. One afternoon, she entered an old house in the central part of the city, mounted the tortuous stairs, and, a few minutes later, sat opposite a pleasant, middle-aged lady, who was bathed in the pink light that penetrated through the curtains.

The comfortable room, furnished in the usual style, did not in any way divulge the secret of the lady's profession. Theresa, with no timidity, yet with some care, managed to put forth her troubles. The pleasant lady mentioned that, scarcely half an hour before, a young Baroness had come to her for an appointment — the second this year. She told further of her fashionable "clientèle," that she had recruited even from the nobility. She jested mildly of the light-headedness of young girls; then without transition, spoke of a very wealthy manufacturer who had recently come in with an actress. This man was tiring of his sweetheart, and she thought she could arrange a meeting for Theresa.

Theresa took leave with the promise to think the matter over and come again on the following day. As she stepped out of the door, she saw a man standing there. He was dressed in a black overcoat with a shabby black velvet collar, and carried a brief-case. Her heart throbbed painfully. She saw herself arrested, accused, and thrown into prison. And only when she had lost herself in the crowd below did she really become calmer.

This first experience did not discourage her. The very next evening, she visited a woman who had likewise advertised in the paper, but would not give her address except through mail. On the third floor of a new house was a sign on which was printed in gold letters: "Gottfried Ruhsam." A neatly dressed maid ushered Theresa into an almost elegant salon. While waiting, she looked at a photograph album, in which she recognized the familiar faces of many famous personages of the stage.

At last, a man entered, greeted her hastily, and then disappeared through another door. A little later he came back in the company of a slim, no longer young lady, dressed in a comfortable, though well-fitting house-dress. Again the man disappeared, after murmuring a quiet "pardon!" Theresa intercepted the affectionate glance with which Frau Ruhsam followed him to the door. "My husband," she said; and, almost by way of apology, she added: "He is nearly always on the road." Then:

"Well, how can I be of service to you, my dear child?" Theresa expressed herself even more carefully than she had the day before. The woman understood her at once, and asked when she proposed to take up her abode in her house. Theresa answered that such a thought had not entered her mind. The lady stiffened a little, and declared that she seldom agreed to any such arrangement as that which Theresa wished, but she would make an exception in this case, and take all the risks and responsibilities upon herself. She mentioned, however, a price which was out of the question for Theresa.

At that, Frau Ruhsam warned her not to commit any stupidities. She spoke of a man who had married a young girl, even though he knew she had had a child by another man. She cautioned Theresa to beware of the women who advertised in the papers. Only recently, two of them had been arrested.

Theresa was red and confused. She wandered through the streets in the warm, autumn rain as though in a dream. By pure chance, she found herself presently before the house in which she and Kasimir had last been together. Following a sudden impulse, she asked the superintendent if Herr Tobisch had called for the other letters. To her utter astonishment, she discovered that he had, and that only the day before. A new hope

sprung up within her.

In a nearby coffee-house, she wrote Kasimir a letter that held no reproaches, but only passionate assurances of her unalterable love. She would ask him no questions; she realized that there were secrets in an artist's life. She was in excellent health, and wanted much to see him again, no matter where, if only for a quarter of an hour. She left the letter with the janitor. That night she slept well, and awoke with a hazy, happy feeling, as though something uncommonly agreeable had happened to her the day before.

XXXVIII

FOR A TIME, Theresa attempted nothing at all. Sometimes, in the evening, after her day's duties were done, a certain calm would come over her. She would wake at night and think. Everything seemed unreal. Her present condition, her entire life, all seemed strange to her. The figures of her father, her mother, Alfred, Max, Kasimir passed through her mind like phantoms. And the most unreal, impossible thing of all was that, almost without her being aware of it, something alive was developing within her, her mother's grandchild — a creature destined to fate, to youth and age, to fortune and misfortune, to love, sickness, and death, like every one else — just as herself. And since she did not understand it, she simply could not believe it possible, as though, after all, in spite of everything, she must be mistaken.

A too abrupt, well-meant, but not to be misunderstood remark made by the servant, brought her to her senses with a start. People were beginning to suspect how matters stood with her. At the thought, her heart almost stood still with fear. She realized again the seriousness of her position. Once again she attempted what she had twice before tried in vain. This time, the woman whom she went to see immediately inspired her with confidence. She spoke sensibly and kindly to her, stressing the illegality of her profession, of which she was not in ignorance. The laws were stupid, and had no consideration for one's social position. She closed her discourse philosophically with the remark that it were best on all accounts for people not to be born at all. The charges were not exorbitant, and it was arranged that Theresa should present herself for the operation in two days.

Theresa felt a great sense of release. The peaceful serenity in which she passed the next day made the fictitiousness of her calm in the past few weeks all the more clear in her mind. Her condition seemed perfectly natural, and not at all serious. All thought of the disagreeableness and the dangers which she had feared now left her mind. She was serene.

Yet, as she mounted the stairs, on the appointed day, her calm suddenly left her. She rang the bell quickly, so as not to be tempted to flee down the stairs again. But the maid informed Theresa that her employer was out on a case, and would not be back for several days. Theresa breathed freely again. It seemed to her that a painful duty had not merely been postponed, but actually accomplished.

On the first floor, two women stood talking. When Theresa passed, they ceased their conversation, looked at each other queerly, and smiled knowingly. A cab stood below in front of the door. The cab driver greeted her so politely that she felt certain he was enjoying a private jest at her expense. On the way home, she felt that she was being followed. Of course, she knew that all was purely imaginary. She no longer felt conspicuous because the cab driver bowed politely, and even the two women on the stairs did not frighten her. Nevertheless, she knew that she could not make that trip again, nor venture her luck with another such obliging woman.

It occurred to her to go back to Salzburg and confess everything to her mother. She surely would understand and know of some means to help her daughter. Even worse predicaments than this occurred in her romances; and they ended happily, for all that. And in the Salzburg house, many suspicious things had happened. Had she not seen officers and veiled women slip out mysteriously in the dead of the night? And had not her mother attempted to foist her on the old Count? But even so, how could her mother be of any use? She gave up the idea.

Then she thought of going away, anywhere, until after the child was born. She could place it in the care of

a young, childless couple; give it to them, or simply leave it on somebody's doorstep and flee. Finally, she wondered, should she not look up Alfred, confide in him, and plead for his counsel? Such ideas and many others passed through her mind, but she discarded them all as futile. These thoughts came to her not only at night, when she was alone, but even at the dinner table and when she was out walking with the girls. Yes, even when she was helping them with their lessons. She was so accustomed to performing her duties mechanically and spiritlessly that no one seemed to notice what was going on within her.

Meanwhile, the woman to whom she had last appealed for help and advice must surely have returned from her case. Theresa reflected that she could do nothing more sensible than go once again to this woman. She made an appointment for the next day by letter. She did not mention her name, but recalled herself to the lady's mind by mentioning their former conversation.

A few hours before the time set for the visit, there came a letter from Kasimir. He had been, so he wrote her, at home with his mother; he was greatly surprised that he had received no communication from Theresa while she was at Ischl. It was only a moment ago that he had discovered her letter in the janitor's lodge of the house "where once we were so blissfully happy." Those were his words. Theresa became faint as she perused them. He must see her again, he concluded, even though his life depended on it.

She realized very well that he was lying. She felt certain that he had never been away; that he had most assuredly received all of her letters, and not merely the last one, as he claimed. Even his lies, she reflected, were part of him; the very part, indeed, that made him so adorable and attractive. And at that moment she experienced such a deep love for him that she desired nothing more than to hold him for ever, to bind him to herself for all eternity. And this was possible, so she reflected, primarily because there still was plenty of time; still many weeks must intervene before she would have to inform him of her condition. What she had already told him some time ago, he had no doubt already forgotten. However, if he still remembered it and she herself kept silent about it, he would gladly infer, then, that she had been mistaken. Nothing mattered but to be with him, to lie again in his beloved arms.

They met near the entrance of the Stadtpark, as they had done many a time before, in those lovely days of long ago. It was a cold, miserable autumn evening, and Kasimir was already awaiting her when she appeared. He seemed to her to have become somewhat more slender. He wore a rather short, bright-coloured raincoat, with the collar upturned; a coat that seemed much too thin for protection against the raw weather. He greeted her as though they had last seen each other but a few days ago. Why in the world, he asked, had she not written to him? She assured him timidly, in reply, that she had written; and, what was more, that the letters had been called for and delivered.

"What, called for?" he cried out, in surprise. "In all probability, they fell into the hands of an impostor. It's positively dreadful. Just wait until I get back. I'll make it hot for the janitor!"

She asked him why he had not sent her word at Ischl that he had left to pay a visit to his mother.

"Yes, you're right in asking that. But if you had any idea of the conditions at home! My mother's brother committed suicide."

As he said this, he pointed shyly to the black band surrounding his soft, gray hat.

"But I would rather not tell you now all the things I learned while at home. Some other time, dearest, I'll let you know everything." — In such wise did he express himself. "Now, everything is all right again. I even have hopes of obtaining a permanent position on the staff of an illustrated newspaper, and in addition, an art dealer has undertaken to sell a few of my pictures."

In the dining-room which she recognized so well, and which she noticed had not become any more pleasant since her last visit, he became more tender than he had ever been, and happy, too, just as in the days

when she had first known him. He questioned her about her summer vacation, and jestingly demanded to be informed if she had also remained faithful to him. In reply, she stared dumbly at him, quite failing to comprehend his question, as though certain plans, which she had afterwards discarded, had never really existed for her. She told him of her walks, her trip to Salzburg, and the demands of her work which, she complained, exhausted her.

Kasimir shook his head disapprovingly at this last comment.

"It's beastly," he asserted, with vigour, "to have to exist in such a state of slavery. But it won't last much longer, you may rest assured! In any case, you must leave your position with the Eppich family and try to support yourself by giving lessons. I'll soon have a fixed income; then, we can occupy an apartment together. And really, after all is said and done, why should we not, as a matter of fact, get married? Wouldn't it really be the most sensible thing to do — why, in a certain sense, even the most practical thing to do?"

Notwithstanding the warnings of her better judgment, she could not forbear to accord him again her complete confidence. To be sure, timid doubts tried to assert themselves in her mind; but she crushed them, before they could take possession of her. Nevertheless, she was careful not to betray anything of her condition to Kasimir. The right moment for confession, so she thought, had not yet arrived. "Who knows," she mused herself, "how long it will be before the confession will be received by him as welcome and joyful news?"

XXXIX



THREE DAYS LATER, on a Sunday afternoon, they met again. For the first time since their acquaintance began, he brought her some flowers, and what aroused her to even greater excitement, he offered a small sum of money — in payment, as he expressed it, "of a part of his debt." She refused to think of receiving it, but he insisted with so much vigour that she at last consented to take the money out of his first month's salary. He readily agreed to this proposal, and pocketed the money once more.

"And now," he proceeded, "I must beg your forgiveness for mentioning a matter of which I have never spoken to you before, but which I can no longer conceal."

This preamble seemed ominous to her; but how quickly and gladly did she pardon him, when all that he had to confess was that he had this time spoken to his mother about her.

"And why not? In a short time, you two women will know each other and love each other well!"

Tears arose in Theresa's eyes. Now she, too, refused to conceal any secrets from him. He listened to her confession calmly, earnestly, and with obvious emotion.

"I had a suspicion that things were so; and all in all, it is a sign that we were meant for each other and that we must live together for ever. It's a genuine sign of fate. But," he continued, "I consider it my duty to warn you against acting in too much haste. In the meantime, you had better not give up your position with the Eppich family. One can't notice it on you at all. You mustn't leave the place before the New Year, in any case. It is two months until then, and goodness knows what might not take place in the meanwhile, especially as my affairs are apparently beginning to change for the better."

She left his arms calmed and almost joyful.

"I'll let you hear from me," he assured her, "in two or three days, at the very most."

Yet she had to wait a whole week for the promised information; and when it came, it proved to be a terrible disappointment, for Kasimir wrote that he was compelled to leave for home very suddenly on some business in connection with the settlement of his late uncle's estate. She wrote to him at once, in care of the address which he left her. She wrote a second and even a third time, but received no answer. At last, she decided to do something that she had not done before; namely, to fill out a return address envelope. Three days later, she received it back in person from the letter-carrier. It was marked: "Addressee Unknown." Her shock was not so keen as she had anticipated, for' she was in reality prepared, deep down in her soul, for precisely such an eventuality. But now she also knew that there could be no other way out for her, however the affair might turn, but the way which she had determined upon long ago. Nevertheless, she postponed from day to day putting her decision into execution; her anxiety mounted. Bad dreams troubled her sleep. And to cap this, it chanced that again, just at this time, there appeared articles in the newspapers about a suit against a physician for a crime against "budding life." Theresa became fully convinced that she would assuredly die, if she permitted the fearful operation to be performed upon her. But, as soon as she had decided to do nothing definite and let matters run their natural course, there came upon her a strange feeling of restfulness, at once blissful and incomprehensible.

XL

ONCE, AS SHE was walking with her wards through the central section of the city, she led them, partly by accident, partly with conscious intent, into the Cathedral of Saint Stephan. Since that memorable summer day when she had received the news of her father's death, she had not been inside a church. They halted in front of a side altar, which stood in almost total darkness. The younger girl, who was inclined to piety, knelt down and seemed to pray. The elder allowed her glance to wander at random. Her whole attitude bespoke her boredom.

Theresa felt her heart rise again with new courage. She had never been religious, in the true sense of the word. As a child and as a young girl, she had always taken part in the prescribed religious exercises, with zeal, but without genuine emotion. Today for the first time, a strong inner need caused her to bow her head. She folded her hands prayfully, but her lips were firmly closed. When she left, she did so with the firm intention of returning again, soon and often. And, in fact, thenceforward she seized every opportunity, either when alone or with the girls, though it might be but for a few minutes, to enter any church that she happened to encountered on her path, to say a short prayer. Soon that failed to satisfy her, and on the first Sunday in December, she asked permission of Frau Eppich, who manifested no surprise at the request, to take the morning off to go to early mass. There, whether on account of early morning fatigue or because of a lack of real piety, of which she accused herself — there, in the crowd, she remained unmoved, despite the rich music of the organ and the sacred unction of the ceremonies; and when she left the church and stepped out into the cold, frosty morning air, she felt more downcast than ever.

She now recited her prayers every evening at home, with an intensity even greater than any that she had ever displayed in the days of her childhood. And just as in those days prayer had come easily to her and she had begged the grace of heaven upon her parents, her teachers, her girl friends, and even her dolls, so now she prayed for divine mercy and forgiveness, not alone for herself, but also for her mother, whom she recognized as a lost and erring soul; for the child, whose first stirrings she now felt within her; and even for Kasimir, who, whatever else he might be, had sired this child, and who would perhaps one day find his way back to it — and perhaps also to her. And once she even offered up a prayer for her father's everlasting bliss, and then dropped bitter but healing tears upon her pillow.

A few days before Christmas, Frau Eppich called Theresa into her room and informed her that she was sorry that they could not longer keep her in the house. "I was really hoping that you would voluntarily take your leave at the right time," she said, "but since, for some incomprehensible reason, you seem to fail to realize your situation, I must insist, if only on account of the girls, that you leave today, or at the very latest, tomorrow."

"To-morrow," replied Theresa, almost in a whisper.

Frau Eppich nodded assent.

"Everybody in the house is already prepared for your departure. I have told them," Frau Eppich explained, "that your mother in Salzburg is ill."

Softly, and as if mechanically, Theresa replied:

"In any case, I thank you for your kindness, my gracious lady!"

She went immediately to her room and started to pack her belongings.

The leave-taking took place quickly and without any special excitement. Dr. Eppich expressed the hope

that her mother might soon be well again; the girls believed, or pretended to believe, that Theresa would soon return; but in the mocking face of young Master George, she clearly read the thought: What a clever dog I am!

XLI

SHE SPENT ANOTHER night with Frau Kausick. But before the next morning had come, she realized that she could not prolong her sojourn among so much wretchedness and squalor. She considered her situation. Since her entire portion of her father's estate had been paid to her, she hoped, with some economy, to make it last possibly a year. Above all else, she had to find a suitable refuge for her approaching confinement. "But after that?" she asked herself. "What then, when all this will no longer concern myself alone?" Thought and breath failed her, as though she now for the first time realized with complete clearness what the future held in store for her. And suddenly she thought of Frau Ruhsam as the only person from whom she might receive sympathetic understanding, not only of her physical condition, but of her spiritual situation as well.

The friendly aspect of Frau Ruhsam, as evoked in her memory, aroused her to new hope. She went to seek her at once, without confessing to herself that any expectation drew her thither, other than of merely finding a haven for the period of her confinement.

Frau Ruhsam did not appear the least surprised at seeing Theresa again. As the latter approached the subject of her mission by asking timid and clumsy questions, Frau Ruhsam exhibited some impatience and, thinking that Theresa lacked the courage to state the actual issue, sought to come to her assistance by volunteering the information that she could recommend a physician who might perform the small operation at her home.

"Of course, the costs—" said Frau Ruhsam; but Theresa cut her short. She explained that she had not come on that account; that she no longer contemplated such measures. "Oh, I see!" observed Frau Ruhsam. "Then it is to arrange for lodgings. That would be" — she paused and eyed Theresa critically— "until about the middle or the end of May." As it happened, she had a few calls for just about that time, but she would see what could be done.

Though Theresa had not thought of it before, the offer attracted her. Here she would find rest, friendliness, and perhaps kindness — everything she longed for. She inquired as to the terms. At the rate quoted, a stay of three weeks would have consumed Theresa's whole fortune.

"It's really not too high," declared Frau Ruhsam. "Perhaps you will come sometime with your husband, and your husband will then see that for himself. I don't think you'll find anything better, and I promise absolute discretion. As regards the police notification, even that I can manage to arrange."

Theresa replied that she would talk the matter over with her husband, and left.

She decided to remain with Frau Kausick for the time being, at any rate. Soon she even became adapted to the humble circumstances which she found in the Kausick establishment. Frau Kausick was away all day. Theresa thus spent most of her time with the children, and she enjoyed helping them with their lessons and playing with them, thus keeping her tutorial talents in practice, so to speak. In addition, she felt safe here from any possibility of discovery, precisely as if she were in a strange city. And gradually, she adapted herself to the people among whom she now moved, not alone in her physical manner of living, but also in her language, even to the point of speaking in their dialect. From day to day, she spent less care upon her clothes; and the rapidly changing form of her body encouraged in her a carelessness which further operated to shut her out at the same time from her former world.

In order to dispel the monotony which frequently seized her, she subscribed to a circulating library in the suburbs, and quickly devoured many carelessly chosen books during the numerous hours which she spent

alone in her wretched chamber, always fascinated by, and often deeply engrossed in the spectacle of a fantastic and trivial world. There were also a few casual conversations, held mostly on the stairs, with the humble families of the neighbourhood. And if ever anybody made a remark about Theresa's condition, it happened casually, good-naturedly, jestingly, for no one in this circle found anything unusual in Theresa's pregnancy, or even particularly noticed it.

But there were moments, especially in the early morning, while she still lay in bed, when, awakening from her stupor, she would see her whole existence as an unintelligible and unworthy thing. But no sooner did she become aware of her corpulency, as she usually did after her first involuntary movement, than she felt as though there rushed forth from the new life that was developing within her, a stream of sweet exhaustion, which seeped through all her limbs from some hidden source — a stream in which her whole being, given over fearlessly and humbly to a natural fate, magically dissolved.

She was singularly free from all the ailments which confinement usually brings to women; on the contrary, she experienced a condition of increased wellbeing. Only a certain physical lassitude increased from day to day; and it frequently happened that when, in the morning, she sat on the bed, combing her hair, she would remain for minutes with the comb in her hair as though petrified, and she would stare at the strange face which looked back at her from the wooden framed mirror which hung on the otherwise bare wall in front of her — a pale, mealy, almost bloated face, with half-open, somewhat livid lips, and large, amazed, vacuous eyes. Then, suddenly recovering from her blankness, she would shake her head, comb her hair, sing softly to herself, rise with some difficulty, and approach the mirror, so that, for a moment, her image would disappear in the vapour of her breath. When it reappeared, a queer expression of sorrow would seem to suffuse it — an expression which Theresa had not noticed before.

On a clear day in February, when she had just read a chapter in a novel in which the activities of a large city at night were temptingly described, the desire awoke in her to go again and see something equally happy and brilliant; and it seemed to her that nothing could be easier than to satisfy this longing. All that was necessary was to conceal her face behind a veil; with her figure, she felt certain that no one would recognize her.

Late in the afternoon, she left the house. At first, she felt a perceptible heaviness in her limbs, which, however, disappeared as though by magic as soon as Theresa arrived on a principal thoroughfare whose long and well-illuminated parallels seemed but to hint of still brighter and more beautiful regions. She rode on the street-car to the opera, allowed herself to be pushed forward by the crowds, stopped here and there in front of window displays, and was both excited and overjoyed at all the light, the noise, and the crowds.

She attended to a few minor, long-needed purchases; and it gave her a queer feeling to be spoken to, for the first time in her life, as "gnàdige Frau." When she left the store, a great feeling of lassitude overcame her. She hastened home, and went to bed at once.

Frau Kausick asked her casually what plans she had made for the near future.

"You cannot possibly remain here," said she, "and I think it high time that you looked about for a suitable place."

Frau Kausick mentioned the Foundling Hospital. Theresa shuddered at the thought. On the following morning, she went out to look for a room.

XLII



THE UNDERTAKING PROVED to be more difficult than she had anticipated. Every room had its own drawbacks, which were not at first apparent. It thus happened that Theresa had to change her residence three times in several weeks. Then, at last, she found a room on the fourth floor of a rooming house. It was kept by an old woman, was very clean and neat — and, by luck, was not above a room where children could be heard crying and screaming, or a drunken couple quarreling at every hour. The landlady seemed, from her appearance and speech, to belong to the better class. At home, she wore a faded, though well-made dress of pink satin, and while house-cleaning, which she herself attended to, she wore long gloves, which showed signs of frequent mending. During the first few days, she spoke only briefly to Theresa as she prepared her humble lunch, and seemed not to desire to enter into a more protracted conversation. In the afternoon, she usually left the house not to return until late at night.

Hence, Theresa was much alone; and when alone, she loved to take advantage of her privilege to use the so-called parlour. With its bright curtains and the oil paintings on the wall, the parlour seemed more pleasant than Theresa's bare room. After many changes of lodgings which she had made in the last few weeks, she felt so tired and heavy that she could hardly bring herself to go out of the house. She stopped reading books, but still continued to read the newspapers, which she devoured from the first to the last word, in a thoroughly mechanical manner, without really knowing in the end what the news of the day really was. Then she attempted to recall to her memory the various people who had been of significance in her life. But she seldom succeeded in concentrating her attention on any definite person, even for a short time. All the images disappeared at once, and they all floated about, vague and remote, like figures fancied in a dream. She fared no better even when she thought about herself. Once again she contemplated herself objectively. She felt lost; she could not comprehend her being or her fate — that the bloated body upon which she gazed, the hands which lay clasped upon her knees, really belonged to her; that her father had died in an insane asylum; that she had been the sweetheart of a Lieutenant, that in some Moravian or Bohemian village, or God knows where, somewhere out in the world, lived a man whose child she was bearing. All this seemed as unreal to her as the child itself — the child which, these many weeks, had given unmistakable signs of its existence, and whose heart she could feel beating in unison with her own.

It seemed to her as if some time in the past, she had loved this still unborn child. She hardly knew when, and whether it had been for an hour or for many days. Now she experienced none of this love. Neither did she feel surprise or regret that things stood with her as they did.

A mother... she knew that she was destined to become one, that she was actually a mother already; but it really concerned her not at all. She asked herself: would it have been different, if she had fulfilled the duties of her sex in a more fitting way than that fated to her; for example, if she were legally bound to the father of the child, or if, as a wife, she awaited the hour of birth in a well-ordered home. But all this was so far beyond her comprehension she could not even visualize it as a happy state.

Now and then, she was visited by another fancy. Since she felt no mother love stirring within her — no longing for, and hardly any knowledge of the child — perhaps, after all, it might be a delusion, a monstrous mistake. She had once read or heard of cases which bore all the resemblances of pregnancy, but yet were not. Was it possible, since her soul knew nothing and desired to know nothing of the child, that that which she had experienced physically in the past months was nothing else than repentance, bad conscience, fear — emotions

which she denied to herself, and which betrayed their presence in this manner? The strangest thing, however, was that she did not long for her term of pregnancy to end; on the contrary she felt a certain diffidence about having to return to the world which she had left. Would she ever again be able to adapt herself to the normal routine of life; ever again be able to talk with intelligent people, and follow a regular routine of business. Could she ever again be a woman among women? She was now far removed from any willing or doing; and she had no other connection with the world than the bit of blue sky which she could see as she leaned back in the corner of the sofa. Thus, Theresa's mind willingly lost itself in idle speculations, as though she perceived that, as soon as she returned to practicality, only sorrow and pain would await her.

What appeared at times as somewhat strange to Theresa, was the circumstance that Frau Nebling seemed to notice absolutely nothing of her condition. At any rate, she did not take the slightest interest in it. At noon, the two women would sit together; in the afternoons, Frau Nebling always left the house, not to return before a late hour. At times, the consciousness of her solitude completely overwhelmed Theresa, like a sudden shock. Once she decided to invite Sylvia to come to see her and wrote her a short note. But when the latter called to see her on the following Sunday, Theresa instructed Frau Nebling to inform her that she had again moved away, she did not know where.

One day, as she was looking out of the window, she saw her brother rounding the corner. She quickly retreated into the room and feared for a few minutes that he had seen her and had gone into the house to ask for her. But immediately she felt annoyed at this silly apprehension because, as she said to herself, there was no man in the world to whom she was less responsible than to him. Furthermore, she felt quite secure from detection.

Frau Nebling had not even hinted that Theresa's further stay would be uncomfortable or painful to her. She did not lack money, for the time being. "And if it becomes necessary," thought Theresa, "I can have a doctor called who will be sworn to secrecy. It is unthinkable that Frau Nebling would turn me out of the house with a child on only a day's notice. Whatever happens, I shall manage to set things in order here, without having to hurry."

During these days, she toyed at times with the idea of writing to Alfred. She knew, however, that she would not do so; but this was a picture which she loved to embroider. She would imagine him calling on her, deeply moved by her plight — very deeply moved. She dreamed on — he still loved her, and surely he would also love her child; he had made her his wife; he was a country doctor, and they lived in a beautiful region; she bore him two children, no, three. And was he not really the father of this first child whom she was expecting? That fellow, Kasimir Tobisch — did he really exist? Had he not always seemed somewhat like a ghost? He might have been Satan himself!

Alfred was her friend — her only friend. Yes, he was her lover, even though he knew nothing about it. And his appearance took on a new and wonderful transformation in the recollection of her heart. His soft, much too soft features were ennobled, so that he almost appeared to her in the image of a saint. His voice seemed to her, through the distances of time, to be low and sweet; and when, in her retrospective thoughts, she saw him tenderly embracing her in that wide, dark field at home, she felt as though she were soaring with him above the earth, heaven-bent.

XLIII



On a night in April, ten days earlier than she had anticipated, Theresa was surprised by the pangs of childbirth. She leaped out of bed and knocked on Frau Nebling's door. The landlady was not yet home. She thought of running downstairs, or at least of calling to the porter's wife from the landing. But she stopped before she reached the door: the pains had already abated. She turned back into her room and got into bed. A few minutes later, the pains began to manifest themselves again.

"Is there still time to get to a hospital?" she asked herself. "Shall I call a carriage from the window? Could I not manage to go there on foot? It is not far from here."

She rose again, opened her bureau, and began to remove pieces of clothing and linen. Then, exhausted, she dropped her hands and sat down again. A short while later, she paced up and down the room in renewed, ever more harrowing pain. Then she returned to her bed, lay down, and moaned and sobbed. Could she be heard? She wanted people to hear her.

"Why should they not hear me? Is what is happening to me shameful? Nobody in the house knows who I am. My name itself means little. But why did I give them the right one? Why did I stay in Vienna, anyhow? Couldn't I have hidden away in the country? Is it really possible? Am I actually bearing a child? I, Theresa Fabiani, the daughter of a Lieutenant and of a noble lady — am I bearing a child? Will it really be true that I have borne an illegitimate child?"

Frau Nebling suddenly appeared at the open door, her eyes wide with fright. She had heard Theresa's cries below on the stairs.

"What, have I cried? Oh, it was nothing. It can't be anything yet. At the very earliest, there will still be ten days. I was only startled at awakening from a bad dream."

Frau Nebling left, reassured. Theresa heard the moving of furniture and the hushed voices in the next room, which she had become accustomed to hear every evening. A window was opened, then closed again. She began to fall asleep. Then, suddenly, the pain returned. She fought it down again with great effort, clenching a handkerchief between her teeth and stretching her arms on the pillow.

"Am I mad?" she asked herself. "What am I doing? What do I want? Oh, if only I could die! Perhaps I am dying! Then everything will be all right. What shall I do with my child? What will my brother say about it?"

All the modesty of her girlhood days awakened again within her. It seemed inexplicable to her, like the evil deception of a nightmare — such a thing as happens only to others, or such as one might read about in the newspapers and in novels. But that such a thing should actually be in the process of being fulfilled upon her was incredible.

"Perhaps there is still time to make an end of it all!" she thought. Then, suddenly, she cried out: "Help! Help!" Again she jumped out of bed and dragged herself through the hall to the door of Frau Nebling's room. She listened a moment, then knocked. There was no sound. Then she recovered her self-possession.

"What do I want of Frau Nebling? I don't need her. I don't need anybody. I want to be alone, just as I have been for so long a time. I like it better that way."

She lay quietly in her bed, until the pains suddenly overwhelmed her with such mighty force that she could not even cry out.

"Now," she thought, "now it is too late to call for any help. No, no! Help! No! I want to die! It is best that I should die — I, and the child, and the whole world with us!"

XLIV

RELIEF HAD come at last. An exhaustion, deep as death, yet filling her with joy, took possession of Theresa as she lay on the bed. The candle on the table had been burning the whole night. "When did I light it?" She could not recall. And there was the child. There it lay, with its half-open, blinking eyes and a wrinkled, ugly, senile face.

He is probably dead. Surely it is dead. And if it is not yet dead, it will surely die in the next moment. "That is exactly what ought to happen, for the mother who bore you must also die!"

She lacked the strength to turn her head. Her lids kept closing in spite of her efforts to stay awake, and she breathed short, deep sighs.

Suddenly it seemed to her that the child's features had moved; its arms and feet moved also, and its mouth was pursed as though it were about to cry. She heard a soft, complaining voice. Theresa was amazed. Now that the child gave evidence of life, its presence became strangely ominous; yes, even threatening.

"My child!" she thought. "And this child is an independent being, existing for itself alone! It has breath, sight, and a wee, small voice; a very tiny bright little voice, which comes from a new, live soul! And it is my child! But I do not love it. Why do I not love it, since it is my child? Perhaps it is merely because I am so tired; too tired to love anything on earth."

And it seemed then to her that she would never recover from her utter weariness.

"Why should you want to come into the world?" she asked, in the depths of her heart, of the gently whimpering, wrinkled creature, as she stretched out her right arm toward it and tried to draw it close to her. "What will you do in the world, without father, or mother? And what shall I do with you? It is well that you are soon to die. I will tell everybody that you never really lived at all. Who will care? Were you not already dead? Did I not consult three or four women, so that you might not be born? What shall I do with you now? Can I travel about the world with you? I must worry about other people's children. I would have to give you away, just the same. I could not keep you. I already killed you, three or four times, before you were born. What shall I do with a dead child, my whole life long? Dead children belong in the grave!

"I cannot throw you out of the window, or into the river, or in the canal. God preserve me from that! I will only look at you severely, so that you may know that you are dead. The instant you know that you are dead, you will fall asleep and pass into eternal life. It won't be long, and I shall soon follow you. Oh, look at all the blood!

Frau Nebling, Frau Nebling! Oh, why am I calling her? They will find me soon enough. Come, my babe! Come, my little Kasimir! You don't want to be a bad man, like your father, do you? Come! You will lie comfortably here. I will cover you well, so that nothing, nothing, will hurt you. Here, under the pillow, it is good to sleep, good to die. Another pillow, so that you may be warmer. Goodbye, my child! One of us will never awaken — or both of us, perhaps — never again! I mean it for your good, my sweet little child. I am not the right mother for you. I do not deserve you. You must not live. I am here for other children; I have no time for you. Good-night! goodnight!..."

Theresa awoke as from a horrible dream. She wanted to weep, but could not achieve tears.

"What has really happened? Where is the child? Did they take it away from me? Is it dead? Was it buried? What have I done with my child?"

Then she perceived the pillows piled high beside her. She pushed them away, and beheld the child. It lay

there; it opened its lips; its nostrils distended; it moved its fingers; it sneezed. Theresa breathed deeply; she felt herself smiling, and knew that she had tears in her eyes. She drew the baby close to her, took him in her arms, and pressed him to her breast. He snuggled against her and drank.

Theresa groaned. She looked round. It was an awakening like none that she had ever known. The early morning light filtered into the room. The bristling noises of the day penetrated to her. The world was awake.

"My child, my child!" sobbed Theresa. "It lives, lives, lives! But who will nurse it, when I am dead? For I want to die! I must die!"

But her longing for death was tinged with a singular sentiment of bliss. The child would drink her life out of her soul. He would suck her life into his, drop by drop, and her own lips would become hard and dry.

She stretched out her arm for the cup of tea which had been standing on the night table since the previous evening. But she feared to disturb the child, and hesitated an instant. The child, however, as though understanding, stopped suckling, thus enabling Theresa to grasp the cup. In fact, she had strength enough to sit somewhat more erect, and to bring the cup to her lips. With her other arm, she continued to hold the child; to hold it tightly. And to her memory came the picture of that distant hour in a wretched little hotel room when she had been loved by a strange man, and had received this child.

That hour, and this one; that night, and this morning; that frenzy, and this perfect clarity of mind — was it possible that they had any connection whatever? She drew the boy closer to herself, and knew that he belonged to her alone.

When Frau Nebling entered the room, she showed not the slightest trace of astonishment at what had happened.

Without losing time or asking questions, she attended, with the skill of a midwife, to everything which the occasion required. It was now apparent that she had anticipated every possible need. A physician appeared — an elderly, cheerful man, dressed in the fashion of a past generation. He sat down at Theresa's bed, examined her, gave orders and advice, and, on leaving, pinched her cheek in a fatherly, somewhat hesitant manner.

On this and on the ensuing day, Theresa received as much attention as could be bestowed, during the time immediately after a confinement, on a blissful young wife in, her well-ordered home.

XLV

FRAU NEBLING SEEMED a person transformed since the birth of the child. She who was formerly so silent, now chatted with Theresa as if she were an old friend. Without having to ask questions, Theresa learned much of her life. Among other things she ascertained that she was engaged by a light opera company to play the part of an elderly lady, but that, during the few weeks past, she had not been required. She had been thrice a mother; her children were alive, but living abroad. She failed to inform Theresa whether or not she was married, or about the common parentage of children, just as Theresa failed to mention the paternity of her own child and the circumstances of her sorrowful experience.

Much as they discussed motherhood and the happiness of being a mother, they had little to tell each other about the happiness and the pangs of love, as though these things had not the remotest connection with the pangs and the joys of motherhood.

The doctor came to see Theresa several times after this, but rather to pay her friendly visits, than because of any real need of his attentions. It turned out that he was the house physician at the theatre, and was a good friend of Frau Nebling. Occasionally he told, with a certain dry humour, several anecdotes out of his experience; and some of these held a double meaning, which Theresa did not at all resent.

There was another frequent visitor — a young woman who lived in the same house: the childless wife of an ill-paid clerk, who was away all day at his employment. She would sit on the edge of Theresa's bed, and stare with moist eyes at the week-old child as the mother held him to her breast.

After a week, Theresa began to realize that she must soon make her plans for the future. As it developed, Frau Nebling's activities had anticipated her even on this point. One day, a chubby little country woman arrived, and offered to undertake the care of the child in her own home, for a relatively small monthly payment. She had brought along her own eight-year-old girl, whose red cheeks inspired confidence, even if she did squint a little.

She explained that she had often taken care of children. The last one had just left her house, the parents having married and taken the little one with them. She mentioned this with a friendly smile, as though it might be taken as a portent of felicity for Theresa. A few days later, Theresa, holding her youngster in her arms, sat beside Frau Nebling in a one-horse cart, which took them to the railway station. Soon after they left the house, a pedestrian at a street corner crossed in front of the wagon and chanced to glance up at its occupants.

Only the instant before, Theresa had taken the precaution of leaning back under the half-open cover. But a gleam in the pedestrian's eye assured her that he had seen and recognized her, just as she had him.

It was Alfred, and it touched Theresa deeply that he should see her in such circumstances, after so long a period of separation. It happened, by mere chance, much to Theresa's delight, that, just a second before, Frau Nebling had taken the child for a moment out of Theresa's arms into her own.

"That was the man!" said Theresa, as though to herself, with a happy smile.

Frau Nebling looked out of the wagon, to the rear, and faced Theresa again.

"The young man with the gray hat?" she asked.

Theresa nodded.

"He is still standing there," said Frau Nebling significantly.

And only now it dawned upon Theresa that, after her cry of recognition, Frau Nebling had undoubtedly

taken the young man with the gray hat to be the father of the child. Theresa did not trouble to inform her of her error. It curiously pleased her to be so misunderstood, and she remained silently smiling until they had reached the station.

XLVI

AFTER A RIDE of hardly two hours in the crawling train, they reached their destination. The woman, Frau Leutner, awaited them at the station. They walked through the village, past comfortable little villas, most of which were still unoccupied, until they reached a narrow side lane which led up a steep incline to a not unattractive house, surrounded by blossoming fruit trees. Despite the low elevation, the situation afforded a considerable view of the whole neighbourhood. The village, a humble summer resort, lay at their feet; the railway tracks disappeared in the distance. The main thoroughfare was soon lost among the forest-clad hills. Behind the farmhouse lay a meadow, reaching to a stone wall whose upper edge was overgrown with bushes. In a clean, low-raftered room, the farmer's wife served her guests with milk, bread, and butter, and began at once to busy herself about Theresa's child, all the while explaining in great detail how she would nourish and attend it.

Then, while Frau Nebling remained with the child, she showed Theresa about the house. She took her to see the garden, the chicken coop, and the barn. The farmer himself, a tall fellow with drooping whiskers, came home from the fields. His body bent forward in walking. He said little, observed the child with glassy eyes, nodded a few times, shook Theresa's hand, and left.

Agnes, the eight-year-old child, returned from school and seemed pleased at finding that there was a baby in the house again. She took him in her arms; her whole behaviour indicated that she already perfectly understood how to deal with babies. In the meantime, Frau Nebling reclined on her raincoat beneath an oak tree, which stood in majestic isolation a little to the side of the house, and on whose massive trunk was suspended a picture of the Virgin Mary, framed in wood, protected by a glass pane, and surrounded by a faded wreath.

Time flew by. Only when the moment of leave-taking approached, did Theresa begin to realize that she must part with her child, and that, despite her many worries, an exceptional and beautiful epoch in her life was ending. On the way home, she spoke not a word to Frau Nebling. When she finally reached the house where everything reminded her of her boy, she felt as though she were returning from his funeral.

She awoke in a bad mood the next morning. Nothing would have pleased her more than to revisit Ensbach. A sudden rainstorm prevented this. The day after, it rained and stormed again. Not until the fourth day could she be with her child again.

It was a mild spring day. They sat out in the open under the pale blue sky, whose hue reflected in the eyes of her child.

Frau Leutner discussed in detail all sorts of domestic and farm matters, and narrated her many experiences during the years which she had devoted to the care of children.

This time, her husband joined them and remained a little longer, though still, for the most part, as silent as ever. Agnes appeared for dinner, paid little attention to the child, and soon afterwards ran off.

Theresa departed, more reassured and less sad than on the former occasion.

She remarked to Frau Nebling that same evening, that it was high time she began looking for work. Again Frau Nebling had anticipated her, and instantly supplied her with a number of addresses. Before the next day had run its course, Theresa had interviewed several ladies, and before evening had her choice of three positions. She chose one where she would have only a seven-year-old girl to supervise. The father was a rich merchant, the mother a good-natured, somewhat phlegmatic woman. The child was docile and pretty.

Theresa felt quite happy in her new surroundings. She had made arrangements to have a day off every other Sunday, and one afternoon every other week. Until late in the summer, her employers interposed no difficulties in the matter, but on a certain beautiful morning in July, the mistress, for some reason or other, asked Theresa to dispense this time with her day off, and instead to select any day during the following week that might be agreeable to her. Theresa, however, had been looking forward with eagerness to seeing her child. Contrary to her usual attitude, she insisted with unnecessary vehemence on her rights, which were finally granted. But this occasioned her discharge, and she had to leave the house after the customary notice.

XLVII

SHE SOON FOUND another position in the house of a doctor, as governess of two girls and a boy. The two girls, aged respectively ten and eight years, attended school, and in addition, received instruction at home in French and piano. The six-year-old boy was entrusted entirely to the care of Theresa. It was a model household. There she found everything conducive to comfort, without superfluous luxuries; the marital relationship was ideal, and all the children were docile and well bred. And despite the invariably strenuous day's work from which the doctor returned, there was never a word of impatience or unkindness, never a trace of sullenness, or even an occasional quarrel such as she had been accustomed to witness in so many other families.

Toward the middle of August, she was enabled to spend three entire days with her child. Unfortunately, two of these days were rainy ones. There were times when, sitting in the stuffy room with the farmer's family, a feeling of boredom and emptiness overpowered her. When she clearly realized this, she would rush, as though driven by a twinge of guilt, to the side of her child, who lay quietly sleeping in his crib. In the dim light of this rainy day, his tiny round face appeared to her unusually pale, small, and strange. With some fear, she would breathe on the eye-lids of the child, who at first would make a face as if about to cry, but, recognizing the well-remembered features of his mother looking down at him, began to smile instead. Theresa, overjoyed, would then take the child in her arms, fondle it, and weep with happiness. The farmer's wife, apparently moved, prophesied a happy future for her, and especially a good father for the boy. But Theresa shook her head at this. She declared that she had no intention or desire to share her darling with any one. He belonged to her, and would continue to be hers alone.

The parting was particularly difficult after these three days. When Theresa arrived at Semmering, where Frau Regan was vacationing with the children, she could not conceal her melancholy from the mother and children. In her gentle and friendly manner, without asking a single question, Frau Regan expressed the hope that the fresh mountain air would soon strengthen her. Impulsively, Theresa kissed her hand with emotion, but at the same moment decided not to betray her secret. As a matter of fact, she recovered much more quickly than she had anticipated. Her colour improved, as did her disposition. Strolls and mountain walks were the order of the day. The easy-going familiarity of the summer resort made it possible for her occasionally to meet certain young and elderly gentlemen who refused to respect her wishes for solitude. She resisted all attempts at intimacy. When, during the first days of September, the family returned to town, she did not regret it, but was on the contrary happy to be so near her child again.

The few hours at Ensbach, each week or fortnight, were hours of purest joy. And that feeling of emptiness and monotony, which had overtaken her that rainy summer day, never returned, not even during the dreariest days of autumn. In anticipation, she somewhat feared the winter trips, but soon found her apprehensions on this score unwarranted.

When the farm was snow-covered, nothing was more delightful than to hold her child in her arms and, from the well-heated room, gaze through the windows at the prospect of a white landscape dotted with sleepy cottages and, in the distance, the tiny railway station, from which the dark tracks converged in the distance.

Then came beautiful, spring-heralding days, when she fled the smoky city and found not only spaciousness and release, but also the pleasant companionship of the farm. Her boy on her lap, she would sit on a bench in front of the house and bathe herself in the glorious sunshine.

When spring returned, Theresa fancied that she perceived a portentous connection between the development of her child and the rebirth of Nature. The day when the first cherry blossoms appeared was likewise the day on which her boy ran toward her a few steps without assistance. The day on which the rosebushes of the white villa “Good Rest” in the Bahnhofstrasse were liberated from their straw coverings, was the very one in which Franz cut his second eye-tooth. On one of the gladdest days in April — for this had been an unusually long winter — on her way to the farmhouse, she surveyed the landscape, with its forests, gardens, and hills, clad in its early green dress. Then she caught sight of her little boy, held tightly by the farmer’s wife, standing at the window and clapping his little hands as he watched his mother approach across the meadow with a small package in her hand — for she always brought something along for him. And on a certain day in June, when she picked the first ripe cherries, the boy had, for the first time, spoken a few connected words.

XLVIII



THREE YEARS FOLLOWED — years so similar in their passage, that later, in Theresa's memory, one spring always merged into the other, one summer into its counterpart, and so with autumn, and winter. And this, despite the fact — or perhaps because of the fact — that she led a sort of double existence: the one as governess to the Regan family, the other as the mother of a small boy, who was staying in the country under the care of peasants.

Even on the way to Ensbach, when she went to spend an occasional day there, everything that she left behind her in the city, disappeared; the Regan couple and their children disappeared; the house disappeared, and even the room which she occupied. The whole city was enveloped in a gray mist of unfamiliarity, of which the reality slowly dawned on her only when she left the train, and sometimes not until she had actually entered the house.

But when she sat at table with the Regan family, or played with the children, or took walks with them, or when, her duties completed, she stretched her weary body on the bed, then reappeared the familiar Ensbach landscape, brilliant in the summer sunshine, or covered with the white frost of winter; the house on the hill, with a green or white blanket; the oak tree with the flower-decked image of the Virgin Mary; the rustic couple on the bench before the house or in the low living-room beside the stove. Always it seemed an incredible, fairy-like world. And always, like a marvel, when slowly climbing the sloping road to the Leutner farm, she saw everything as she had left it days or weeks before; and she could see her boy, the same and yet always a different creature, in her arms or on her lap. And it happened sometimes, when she closed her eyes for a short time and then opened them again, that somehow a different lad lay in her arms than him whom she had imagined with her eyes shut.

But things were not always so pleasant as her hopes had pictured them. There were times when Herr Leutner was sullen for long periods. Even the farmer's wife too, usually good-tempered and much inclined to gossip, was sometimes altogether different, unfriendly, and positively combative. On such occasions, when Theresa ventured the slightest criticism, she would make vicious remarks, complaining about the trouble which the boy gave her and the insufficient thanks and appreciation which Theresa gave her for her efforts.

Even after continued increase of payment, much resentment remained. Once they had forgotten to let Theresa know that her child had a rather mild illness. Or items would be added to her account for medicines which could not be properly accounted for. Again and again, Theresa thought she detected, by one sign or another, proofs that Frau Leutner by no means cared for the child as much as she professed. On other occasions, jealous feelings aroused, not only between Theresa and the farmer's wife, but between Theresa and young Agnes. Then Theresa would complain that Frau Leutner and her daughter spoiled the child by too great attention, as though they wished to alienate its affections from her. And, sometimes, bad weather was not exactly conducive to happy thoughts and harmonious feelings. It was enough to drive a person mad, this sitting with wet feet in the cold or over-heated room, which reeked of cheap tobacco smoke, and which was certainly detrimental to the child's lungs.

Theresa several times decided not to ride out to Ensbach, and would let one or two free Sundays pass without seeing her child. At other times, she believed that she could hardly contain her longing, which was so greatly impregnated with fear that her nights were troubled with baleful dreams.

On the whole, however, everything ran smoothly. Theresa often thought herself infinitely happier than

many a mother who had her children always with her and could not therefore fully appreciate her happiness. As for her, the meetings with her child, at least in anticipation, always afforded her the thrill of a holiday.

She was, moreover, quite happy in the Regan house. The doctor, not quite devoid of pride in his work, always remained pleasant, despite the strenuous nature of his profession. Frau Regan continued, moreover, to be a very exacting, though always fair and never moody housewife. The girls were lively, yet diligent and obedient, and greatly attached to their governess. The boy had a quiet nature and a distinct inclination to music, so that already in his eighth year he could, on musical evenings, render the piano accompaniment for Haydn and Mozart quartettes. Theresa often played duets with him, and received, on such evenings, her humble share of the applause. In the atmosphere of activity, order, and respectability which surrounded her here, she was concerned more than ever before with her own instruction, and found time somewhat to further her own musical and linguistic studies.

In this well-ordered existence, there were small occurrences which interrupted the habitual routine of the day.

Whenever Frau Fabiani came to Vienna, on occasional business with publishers and editors, the Regan family would graciously insist on having the governess' mother to dinner. On these occasions, Frau Fabiani displayed a faultless, even actually dignified behaviour. She would take the opportunity to mention her son, a student of medicine, who, despite his extreme youth, had already begun to play an important role in the University, and had recently made a speech at the students' meeting that provoked comment.

After one of these maternal visitations, Theresa met her brother, whom she had not seen in several months, in the city. They discussed their mother, to whose last novel, now appearing serially in a Viennese newspaper, Karl referred with derision and contempt. Theresa felt singularly hurt. Brother and sister bade each other a cold farewell. At the next corner, Theresa turned to regard her brother, and noticed how little to his advantage he had changed in the lapse of only a few years. True, he dressed more carefully than before. But the drooping posture of his head, his somewhat too long, poorly shorn hair, which brushed against his coat collar, and his hopping gait, gave to his whole bearing an ignoble, hesitant, and degraded atmosphere which repelled her.

At first, she had several times felt the obligation of visiting Frau Nebling. One evening, she attended an operetta, for which the actress had presented her with a complimentary ticket. Frau Nebling sang in a shrill, strange voice, and played the part of an elderly, overdressed vampire. She acted in such fashion that Theresa almost blushed for her, and shuddered at the thought that one of her sons might return from abroad and see his own mother in such an indecent costume, painted with scarlet rouge, and prancing about the stage with lecherous looks and demeanour, to the derision even of her fellow actors.

Once, on the street, she fancied that she saw Kasimir Tobisch approaching her. But she was mistaken, for there was hardly any similarity between the father of her child and the gentleman who brushed past her. And when such mistakes occurred to her two or three times thereafter in quick succession, and she always experienced the same painful excitement, she realized that she actually feared to meet Kasimir Tobisch. She did not wish him, of all persons, to hear anything more of her life, and especially, of the existence of the child. But she was even more thrilled when she thought that she recognized, in some passerby, Alfred, whom she would have liked to see again. Though she knew that he lived in the same city, no fortunate accident ever brought them together.

Even the summer weeks with the Regan family, though spent at a different mountain resort each year, became miraculously merged in her mind into a single summer vacation.

Later, she could not differentiate, in her memory, the many young and old men who, at the country resorts,

had tried to flirt with her. That none really succeeded in the attempt was not so much due to her own resistance, or carefulness, or indifference — for in contrast with many precedent and subsequent periods of her life, her senses in these years seemed atrophied — as to the lack of freedom necessitated by her work, which constantly prevented any budding relationship from ripening into intimacy.

It would occasionally happen that she became quite envious of more successful women when, on mild summer evenings, she observed ladies who, after the governesses had retired with the children to their rooms, could promenade up and down the brilliantly illumined square near the hotel, walk as long as they liked and with whomever they willed; or even disappear in the dark. She saw — this, of course, was nothing new to her — women, matrons, and young girls exchange significant glances with men and carry on flirtations; she well knew to what such beginnings generally led.

Frau Regan, though still a pretty, quite attractive, and desirable lady, was one of the few who seemed almost entirely untouched by the prevailing atmosphere. This afforded Theresa some comfort, and she felt protected and guarded in her presence.

Nothing suggested an impending change. Dr. Regan and his wife still continued to treat her with friendliness, and even affection. A kind of friendship had developed between her and the girls, especially the elder. Her duet playing with the gifted boy had become a pleasant habit. Suddenly, one morning in June, just before they were to leave for the country, Frau Regan called her to her room and told her, with some uneasiness, though in a firm and businesslike manner, that they had decided to employ a French governess, and that consequently they must let her go, though, of course, they should do so with the greatest regret. She explained that there was no hurry about her departure. They would give her weeks, or months even, to find another suitable position. For the immediate future, Theresa could decide, according to her own wishes, whether she cared to accompany the Regan family to the Dolomites, or whether, under the circumstances, she would prefer to have the entire summer vacation at her disposal.

Theresa stood pale, stricken to the heart; but she declared at once, without betraying any of the emotions which she felt at this abrupt dismissal, that she would not take advantage of Frau Regan's offer, but would, if possible, leave the house even before the expiration of the usual two weeks' notice.

It appeared strange to her that her unhappiness did not long continue. Indeed, in that same hour, she experienced a certain pleasure, almost a decided joy, at the prospect of a change. She quickly confessed to herself that she had by no means been as happy in this house as she had many times tried to convince herself that she was. And on the following day, when she spoke of her dismissal to Fraulein Steinbauer, the governess in a family that was friendly with the Regans, the governess — an old, embittered creature — quickly convinced Theresa that she had simply been exploited in the Regan house, and was now thrown out into the streets — a destiny repeatedly experienced by all of her kind. The constant kindness of Frau Regan now appeared to her as a mixture of weakness and deception. The selfsatisfied and self-sufficing character of the beloved doctor had always been hateful to her, she now realized. The boy, though truly a highly talented musician, was mentally backward; and the girls, although one could not deny their industry, were nevertheless mediocre. The younger was already somewhat spoiled, while the older one was not without guile. She felt that Frau Regan had long ago informed the girls about the change that was to be made. Falseness and hypocrisy existed everywhere.

She left the house with bitterness in her heart, and swore never to enter it again.

XLIX

THERESA SPENT THE next few weeks in Ensbach, with her child. The country life calmed her. Indeed, at first, it made her so happy that she conceived the idea of looking for pupils among the summer residents, so as possibly to establish herself there, rather than among the city people, whose children she educated only to be dismissed in the end.

She met a number of the townsfolk with whom she would occasionally chat; they sympathized with her and her boy. Some time before, she had made the acquaintance of a cousin of Frau Leutner, one Sebastian Stiozuer, a man still in his prime, who had lately become widowed. He was not at all bad-looking, was well built, in comfortable circumstances, and was seeking a second wife to care for his home.

It happened, not exactly by chance, that he often called on the Leutners, and on these visits he amused Theresa with his naïve and humorous ways. He would also occupy himself, in a touchingly clumsy fashion, with her boy. His, growing inclination for her was manifest.

Frau Leutner did not fail to convey clear hints, and there were times when Theresa seriously considered a possible alliance with him. But the longer he visited her, and the more plainly he conveyed his sentiments, especially on one occasion when, walking together, he had drawn her to him with unexpected brutal strength — the more consciously did she feel that there could never be a lasting affection between them. This she showed so plainly that he instantly withdrew his suit.

But when, following her refusal, boredom seized her, she at first accused herself because the companionship of her boy did not utterly engross her. Then she would tell herself that, despite her love for her boy, she was simply incapable of enduring inactivity any longer; that, furthermore, she had no right to lead an idle life on the farm, without working, and without giving thought to the matter of earning a living.

L



AND SO, SUMMER was still far from ended when she again took a position, this time with a family that at first struck Theresa as being quite fashionable. She was to act as teacher or companion to a fourteen-year-old girl. Several days after accepting the post, she accompanied this family on a trip to a small health resort in Styria, where they took lodgings in a hotel that was far from immaculate. The husband, a prominent public official, remained behind in Vienna.

The Baroness was polite enough to Theresa, but never addressed a single superfluous word to her. The people who lived at the resort were, for the most part old, gouty, and rheumatic. A thin, poorly dressed man of about sixty, who, much to Theresa's bewilderment, bore the name of a famous old family of Hungarian nobles, would sometimes, after dinner, hobble over to their table, leaning on his cane, and converse with them in his native language. Otherwise, they associated with nobody. In addition, the meals were so insufficient and poor that Theresa was reminded of the bitterest days of her youth.

At times, when she was alone with the young Baroness, Theresa would attempt to provoke some sort of conversation with her, by making jesting remarks about the people whom they met on their walks and in the park. But the girl was apparently unable to appreciate any harmless jest, much less understand it; and all that Theresa could get in response was a belated, if not entirely stupid, reply.

They travelled back to Vienna during the most distressing heat of the summer. The meals at home did not prove to be by any means more interesting, even though the husband now shared them. When, for the first time, Theresa had the opportunity to go to Ensbach, she breathed deeply, as though she had just escaped from a prison. From a distance, the house of the Baroness, in which she was now condemned to live, appeared even worse than ever — positively weird. She could hardly understand how she had managed to endure it for so long a time. She put off leaving from week to week, however, perhaps through sheer indifference, or perhaps because she was impressed by the unction of a noble name. But at last, when, at Christmas time, they presented her with a ridiculously small present of money, her patience came to an end, and she gave notice of her intention to find another post.

LI

BUT NOW, EVIL days overtook her. It almost seemed as though fate had decreed that she should witness at close range all the annoyances and ugliness of bourgeois family life. Or was it merely that she had become more observant than before? Three times in succession, she came in contact with unsuccessful marriages. First, it was a young couple, who, without regard for their two children of, six and eight years, and without the slightest regard for Theresa, said such frightful things to each other over their meals that Theresa believed she would die of shame.

At the first quarrel which she witnessed, she simply left the table. When, a few days later, she attempted to do the same thing, the husband called her back, demanding that she should remain, in order that he might have a witness to the cursing to which his wife subjected him. The next time, it was the wife who demanded the same service of Theresa. Both often entertained company at home, on which occasions, they acted the part of a happy couple before the guests. At times, though — and this was a thing quite incomprehensible to Theresa — the couple seemed to understand one another quite perfectly; and just as Theresa had been an unwilling witness of their mutual execrations, so at times she was forced to witness scenes of tenderness, which moved her even more painfully and disagreeably than the more frequent quarrels.

Her next position was in a well-managed, amply provided house, where the occupation of the husband, who was seldom at home, even at nights, remained a mystery to her. She liked the place fairly well, at the beginning. The seven-year-old girl who was entrusted to her care was pretty, confiding, and clever. The mother on some days hardly left her room, while on others, she remained away from home from early morning until late at night, and seemed, in a way that was totally incomprehensible to Theresa, to be absolutely indifferent and unconcerned about her child. But she treated Theresa with friendliness. This cordiality continued to grow, and gradually took on a form which at first filled Theresa with suspicion, then with disgust, and finally with fear. Like an escaping prisoner, she left the house, one morning, following a night during which she had been compelled to keep her door securely locked. She wrote to the master of the house from the station, where she was taking the train to Ensbach for a few days' stay, explaining that a sudden indisposition of her mother had compelled her to leave unexpectedly.

Her next position, as governess of two bright boys of seven and eight, was made untenable by the behaviour of the master. She pretended at first not to understand his significant glances and seemingly accidental contacts with her body, especially since the relationship between the man and his young and still pretty wife seemed to be entirely harmonious. Soon, however, Theresa could no longer ignore the intentions of this man, who in other respects did not displease her. She was obliged to confess that she could not, or would not, long be able to resist his advances. Then, one evening, when his wife and children were in an adjoining room, he made a deliberate attempt to overpower her — an attempt which inspired Theresa with more fright than resistance, but once more necessitated her sudden departure.

LII

NEXT, SHE ACCEPTED what at first appeared to be an excellent position. The employment agent who procured it for her looked upon it as such an unusual opportunity that he expected to receive a special compensation for securing it. The head of the household, Emil Greitler, a bank director, and a man over fifty, was gracious and respectable, and almost diplomatically reserved in his deportment. His wife, an unattractive and faded lady, clung to him with unreciprocated love, and looked up to him with admiration. They had four children. Theresa had nothing to do with the two oldest boys, one of whom studied law and the other, banking. The thirteen-year-old girl and the youngest child, a boy of nine, attended the public schools and in addition, had so many private instructors that Theresa's duty was limited to accompanying the children on their way to and from their lessons and taking them for walks.

Theresa desired to be on terms of greater intimacy with the young girl. But, like her father, whom she also closely resembled in features, she was unapproachable, and responded coldly to Theresa's sympathetic advances. This, at first, annoyed Theresa. She changed her tactics, and was even more severe with the girl than she really cared to be. At last, there developed between them an attitude of complete indifference, which was broken on but rare occasions, either because of a silly and ludicrous fit of temper on the part of Margaret, or of some stubborn decision on the part of Theresa. These episodes would direct their attention again to their former, almost forgotten, half unconscious battle. The nine-year-old Siegfried was a happy child, unusually clever for his age, whom Theresa often had to scold for his talkativeness, but whose droll notions and quaint turns of speech moved to laughter all who heard him. This position left Theresa plenty of leisure, but her employers did not like her to leave the house for any great length of time. Although her services were required only rarely, they wished her to be available at all times. Although there were often small or large parties at the house, Theresa was never invited to join them.

Towards the end of Carnival, in 1902, a large ball was planned. Frau Greitler, who was somewhat ill, depended much on Theresa for assistance in her preparations for this event. Consequently, she could hardly fail to invite her to participate in the festivities. After the music had begun, Theresa was invited to dance by a young man with a small blond moustache. The young masters of the family, the law student and the bank clerk, as well as other guests, also danced with her; but the blond young man came again and again, and chaffed with her in an animated and somewhat familiar manner.

A Lieutenant of Dragoons poured her out a glass of champagne at the buffet, and drank to her health. A dark, curly-headed fellow, with a light wound on his forehead, who had quite shamelessly pressed her to him while dancing, but had hardly spoken a word to her, dared about three o'clock in the morning, to make such audacious advances that she blushed deeply and could make no response.

The blond young man asked her quite frankly if he might not see her again. She denied his request. Still, for several days following the ball, she entertained the hope that she might somehow meet him on the street. And when, a few weeks later, some mention of him was made by the Greitlers at table, she became aware that, at thought of him, her consciousness was oppressed by a sort of disillusionment, not so much on account of this neglected tryst of which he had known nothing, as because of the many other painful and inexplicable deflections which her hopes had suffered in the past few years.

As the Greitler family were invariably a few days late in paying her her salary, Theresa hardly noticed that a full month had passed since she had last been paid. But when, on the first day of the next month, nothing

was forthcoming and she stood in need of money, she felt compelled to speak to Frau Greitler. She was asked to be patient for a few days; and, as a matter of fact, she soon received the greater part of her pay. This would have satisfied her, had not the maid, on the same day, asked her how much they still owed her. It was by no means her habit to allow herself to discuss her employers with the hired help. This time, however, she could not resist the temptation; and she soon learned that the Greitler family was in debt on all sides; that, for example, the caterer's bill from the last dance was still unpaid. Theresa could not and would not credit this. Everything in the household continued without change. The family were still served well. They still ate the very best. They still received guests. Their carriage still stood before the house. The ladies ordered their summer dresses from a first-class dressmaker, just as before. Even the mood of Herr Greitler showed no modification. He still retained the same aloofness toward his wife and children, and never displayed a sign of haste or impatience. At dinner, they would discuss the question of selecting a summer resort, and not a single sign or word suggested that any considerable change in their circumstances was imminent.

One day, however, Herr Greitler left on a trip, as he frequently was in the habit of doing, bade his family a pleasant farewell, as usual, and promised to return within ten days. Even during his absence, not the slightest unusual event troubled the household, until, early one morning, voices and movements in the hall awakened Theresa. She sat up in her bed and listened. Two hours later, the maid informed her that Frau Greitler had unexpectedly been called away. At dinner, the eldest son told them of the sudden illness of a distant relative. But before evening, Frau Greitler returned, deathly pale and looking as though she had been weeping profusely. They could not longer conceal what had happened. The evening papers published the news. The bank had failed, and Herr Greitler had been arrested that morning while on a train, two hours distant from Vienna. Frau Greitler told Theresa that she was at liberty to leave the house at once. But she asked for permission to remain until she had found another position.

It was remarkable to her how quickly the members of the family adapted themselves to their changed circumstances, although at first hardly any change could be detected. They ate as well as before; the children continued to go to school; Margaret remained as stubborn as usual; Siegfried continued to make his droll remarks; the teachers appeared at the usual hours; and there was no lack of company, although among them were many who had not been there before.

When Theresa left the house Frau Greitler, who in these difficult days had exhibited an altogether unsurmised spirit of calm and strength, wished her the best of luck. The remaining salary, of course, was not paid.

LIII

THERESA WAS COMPELLED to take the first reasonably good position offered to her. In her new place of employment, she had to take care of three entirely untrained children, between six and ten years of age, who gave her nothing but trouble. The father was an insurance agent, who did not come home until evening, and then was invariably in a bad temper. The mother, a dull, stupid, and apparently phlegmatic individual, would scream two or three times a day at the children, and quarrel with each child as it approached her. She soon began to treat Theresa as a common servant. Frequently too, she would sink into a sort of lethargy, from which neither household duties nor the clamours of the children could arouse her, so that the whole responsibility of the household would devolve upon Theresa's shoulders. She tolerated this existence for two months; then she gave notice, and left for Ensbach.

It was not merely the reaction, the weariness of feeling, which Theresa experienced after the excitement of the last few months; it was also a sudden desire, not entirely untroubled by qualms of conscience, that drove her now to her Franz. She had concerned herself too little about him in the last three years; she had hardly taken any interest in his growth and education. She tried to justify herself by telling herself that she had lacked the time; that on her free days, she was too exhausted physically and spiritually, to make the journey to Ensbach. Although this might be true, to a certain degree, she felt nevertheless that generally her desire to see her boy had not been too keen. Indeed, at times, when the weeks of separation lengthened, she had sometimes felt the small payments which she made to Frau Leutner as an unwelcome burden.

She would excuse herself on the supposition that Franz's love for his foster-mother was greater than his affection for herself; that he was gradually becoming a peasant child; and that, at certain times, he recalled, in a disturbing way, the hated features of his father. But of late a certain consciousness of guilt repeatedly attached itself to these ideas, and she felt as if she were under an obligation to expiate a wrong done to her boy. She felt as if the weakness and irresolution of her maternal instincts would be avenged upon her and upon the boy. It was with such thoughts that she approached the Leutner's farm, with a trepidation such as she had not experienced for a long time.

She felt a sudden fear of finding her boy ill. For, in fact, she had received no news of him in almost three weeks. Perhaps he did not care to know her any more; perhaps he would say to her:

"Why do you come back, again and again? I do not need you any more!"

She burst into tears, when she saw him run joyfully out to meet her. How gladly she pressed him to her heart, as though now she had won him back for ever! Even Frau Leutner seemed to her more friendly than usual. Frau Leutner was much disturbed by Theresa's worn appearance, and advised her most earnestly to remain in the country, at least until autumn. Theresa felt herself physically and spiritually so fatigued that she acquiesced in this proposal at once. Within a few days, her improvement was marked.

She derived more joy from her boy than she had had in a long time. This time, all his strangeness seemed somehow to have disappeared. He voluntarily joined her on her short walks, a thing which he had never done before, and for the first time, she noticed that his face was frank and open.

A few months before, he had begun to attend school; and his teacher, to whom she once spoke, termed him a bright and active child. Frau Leutner had had to provide various necessities for him. Theresa was behind in her payments and could not defer them any longer. For the first time, she felt compelled to ask her mother for assistance. The money did not come for some time, and as the days passed, the behaviour and disposition of

Frau Leutner, and particularly that of Herr Leutner, toward Theresa gradually became less cordial. After a second call for help, she received from her mother a sum so meagre that it did not enable her to fulfil all of her obligations. Theresa paid a portion of her debt. The attitude of the Leutners thereupon became more and more disagreeable, and Theresa realized that she could not remain any longer in Ensbach. So on a frightfully hot August day, hardly ten days after her arrival, she departed again for Vienna, determined to accept the very first position which might present itself.

LIV

THE TWO GIRLS, of four and six years, who were entrusted to Theresa's care gave her much worry, particularly as the mother was employed during the day in an office, and did not come home until late in the evening.

The father was ostensibly on a business trip, but as no letters ever came from him, Theresa soon quite clearly perceived that he had deserted his wife, who was a bluff, uncharming creature. The youngest girl was sickly. She was perpetually restless at night, which, however, did not seem to disturb her mother, who slept in an adjoining room. When Theresa once spoke of the child's condition, and suggested that it might be advisable to consult a physician, she assured Theresa with some curtness that she knew her duty perfectly well. One word led to another, and Theresa gave notice that she would be leaving her position. She had not realized before that she might be grieved at parting with the small, sickly little girl, but such proved to be the case. For some time to come, she would be thinking of the pale, pathetic face of the little creature and of her smile when, at night, she would throw her small arms about Theresa's neck and cry, and Theresa would comfort her. She did not want to go back to Ensbach until she was in a position to pay off her small indebtedness, and as she did not at once find another position, she decided to stay at a small hotel. She had never lived in a more miserable, forsaken place. She slept without undressing. Unfortunately, too, it rained constantly during these days when she was running up and down a hundred stairs in her fruitless efforts to find a new position.

She did not wish to be too hasty in her decision, this time. She preferred to take her time, and get on meanwhile as best she could, rather than again enter a house where she could not be certain of remaining. It happened that in many homes, where she herself made a good impression and where she would have gladly stayed, she noticed that she was refused because of her shabby clothing. What should she do? Should she turn again to her mother, and be made to receive grudging charity? Should she call upon her brother, with whom she had had no connection of any kind for years? Should she beg for assistance from some of the ladies for whom she had previously worked? All these ideas were repulsive to her. And furthermore, she did not know whence she might reasonably expect really adequate assistance.

That night, as she lay, fully dressed, on the wretched bed, she conceived the idea, which she had once thought of years ago, in a similar situation, of selling herself. She thought of it as of something indifferent to her personally, yet difficult to achieve. Was she still a woman? Did she feel even the slightest desire to lie in the arms of a man?

The miserable existence which she led, as a creature who did not belong to herself, who had no home, who was a mother, but, instead of caring for her own child, was compelled to protect and train the children of strangers; a creature who did not know where she would repose tomorrow night, who went about for a day amid the experiences, the affairs, and the secrets of strange people, as a chance confidante, or as one purposely initiated, only to be thrown out on the sidewalk as an inconsiderable intruder the very next day — what right had such a creature as she to the love of a man, to womanly happiness?

She was alone, and fated to a solitary existence. Was there still any creature to whom she might cling? Her child? Her mother's heart was numbed, as was her whole soul, her body, and everything in it. Even her beauty — she had never been really beautiful — her appearance then, and her youth, were gone. She felt how her lips were drawn into a tired smile. She was twenty-seven years old. But was it not too soon to relinquish

all hope? She remembered the Greitlers' ball, which had occurred only a short time ago, where she had made so many conquests in a single evening.

In the quiet and darkness of her room, while the raindrops pattered ceaselessly against the window pane, she became suddenly conscious, beneath her shabby coat and miserable clothing, of her body, of her skin, and of her throbbing arteries. She became more conscious of them than she had ever been before, even in a lukewarm bath or in the arms of a lover; this was a long-forgotten sensation.

On the following morning, she awoke from a pleasant dream, the details of which she could not recollect. In this mood, with a sudden access of courage, she dared to visit a ladies' tailor whom she knew. She was approached with great friendliness. She apologized for her somewhat shabby appearance, by saying that she had lost her trunk. At her request, they made her, within twenty-four hours, a plain, well-fitting costume, without insisting upon immediate payment. She started out on her search anew. God, how often, how often, had she done that already! But this time, she went with renewed courage.

LV



THE NEXT DAY, she found a desirable position, in the home of a professor's widow, where it was her duty to supervise the education of two quiet, flaxen-haired girls of ten and twelve years, who were not attending a public school this year, on account of their health. The good treatment which Theresa received in this house, the pleasant and agreeable conversation which prevailed there, the simple and obedient natures of the young girls, and the friendliness of the mother, who was still mourning her late husband's death — all these pleasant circumstances at first delighted her. Even the teaching proved an interesting occupation, since it was entirely confided to her hands. She began again, as she had done while at the Eppichs', to prepare herself for her lessons, thereby refreshing her knowledge of many things, and recovering many interests which she had thought were lost to her. She was readily permitted a vacation at Christmas time, and at once went to Ensbach, where she enjoyed the company of her boy as she had never done before. Yet, she could not explain, even to herself, what it was that drove her back to the city during the early afternoon of her second holiday.

As she sat at the simple dinner that evening with the widow and her two children, silent, as usual, while the others thought with melancholy of the deceased head of the family, a sudden, disturbing sense of monotony overcame her. She began to feel a dull hatred against these people, into whose sorrow she, a stranger, was thus irresistibly drawn.

She had, of course, learned often enough that no one took the slightest cognizance of her spiritual condition; that people would weep or laugh with equal indifference to her presence. But she had never felt such rebelliousness against this as in this house, where she really had nothing to complain of, and where, indeed, everybody desired to please her. Moreover, she had not been expected to dinner that evening and in consequence, she arose from her meal, rather more hungry than usual. Theresa determined that night to leave the house as soon as possible; but it was not until spring that she was able to put her decision into execution.

LVI

AFTER AN ALMOST painful leavetaking, when for the first time she left a home with a feeling of guilt toward its occupants, she accepted a position in the household of a hat manufacturer.

She was to act as the teacher of their only child, a badly disciplined and exceptionally handsome seven-year-old boy. What chiefly attracted Theresa's interest was the constant good cheer which reigned in this home. There were guests at dinner almost every night — an uncle, a cousin, a business acquaintance, or a couple of relatives from the country. They ate and drank well, told anecdotes, gossiped, laughed continually, and were plainly delighted and even flattered, when Theresa joined in the laughter.

They treated her as an old acquaintance, and questioned her about her parents and her youth. It was the first time that she could talk freely about her father, the dead officer; her mother, the beloved novelist of Salzburg; and of all the men and women whom she had learned to know in the process of time. It was the first time that she could talk without seeming forward. In such a household she soon felt at her ease.

But the boy, however much trouble his spoiled nature created for her, positively charmed her. She soon discovered that his parents knew well how to humour him, but did not quite understand how to appreciate him. She found that he was not only brighter than his age warranted, but was possessed of a unique, almost superhuman beauty, which reminded her of the costume picture of some prince, she knew not whom, which she had once seen in a gallery. And soon she realized that she loved this child, as much, even more than her own. When he became sick of a fever, it was she who spent three anxious nights at his bed, while his mother, who was also ill at the time, was satisfied merely to obtain reports of the condition of the boy.

Soon after his recovery, suggestions were made for the disposition of the summer holidays. They took the neighbourhood of Salzburg into consideration, and welcomed Theresa's counsel.

Then, one bright Sunday morning, the lady of the house called Theresa to her room and explained to her, in her usual friendly way, that the former governess, who had merely received a half-year's leave of absence to visit a relative in England, was expected to return within a few days. Theresa could hardly grasp the situation. When she could no longer doubt the fact that she must leave, she burst into tears. The lady comforted her, and even teased her, in a good-natured and thoughtless way, about her childishness.

Neither the mistress of the house nor the husband seemed to entertain the slightest suspicion that they had wronged Theresa or caused her pain. The attitude toward her in the house altered so little after this notice that Theresa continued to hope that she might be permitted to remain. Indeed, the family still discussed with her, as before, the various details of the approaching vacation, and the boy spoke enthusiastically of the trips, canoe rides, and mountain climbs which he would take with her. She had to fight back the tears, again and again, at table. One night, half in a dream, she pondered all kinds of romantic plans: to kidnap the boy, to fight against the return of the other governess. Even darker plans, concerning herself and the child, flashed through her mind. Of course, by morning, all these fantasies had vanished.

At last, the day of parting came. The master and mistress had arranged to have the youngster away on a visit to his grandparents. They gave Theresa an inexpensive box of candy and wished her good-luck, without, by even a single word, indicating that they would like to see her occasionally. As, tense and tearless she walked downstairs, she knew that she would never enter this house again. It was not the first time that she had made such a decision. But this really signified very little, for even in those few instances when she had departed from a house without making such a resolve, when she had left a house in amity and friendship, she

had never returned.

She rode to Ensbach, in the hope of recovering her peace of spirit amid natural surroundings and the healing pulsation of intimacy there. She had, too, the additional hopeless desire of loving her child more than she had done before.

None of these hopes were fulfilled; indeed, everything seemed more gloomy than ever. She had never inhabited such a totally strange world. It seemed to her as though everything were antagonistic to her, and, try as she would, she could not succeed in stirring herself to any maternal tenderness toward her child.

It was worse when Agnes, who had meanwhile become a children's nurse in Vienna, came home for a few days. She hated the tenderness which the sixteen-year-old girl showed toward the boy, and she could not bear to see the young girl usurp what should have been her own maternal functions. Sometimes, however, she felt that the attitude of Agnes did not wholly arise from tenderness. It seemed rather as if Agnes only wanted to arouse her anger, to hurt her, to make her jealous. When Theresa accused her of this, she replied contemptuously and insultingly. Frau Leutner took sides with her daughter. A quarrel ensued, in which Theresa lost all control of herself. She was angry with the others, unsatisfied with herself, and she realized that everything would only become worse if she remained longer. And so it came about, for the first time, that she left Ensbach without a real farewell: she left like one escaping.

LVII

ON A HOT day in August, Theresa began work in her new position. She found that the agency had misinformed her concerning many matters with regard to her latest incumbency. In the first place, there was no elegant villa, as she had been assured. True enough, there was a rather large house, situated in the country; but four families were spending their summer vacation there. And these four families were constantly at loggerheads with one another. They even went so far as to quarrel for the benches, chairs, and tables in the garden, and were always backbiting. All of which set the example for the crew of squalling children, of whom the worst were Theresa's three charges — not two, as the agency had said, but three boys, between the ages of nine and twelve.

The mother was still a young woman, though she had already grown corpulent. Early in the morning, she was already bedecked and powdered, and could be seen walking about in a none-too-tidy négligée, though evening always found her smartly dressed. All the members of the family habitually conversed in that terrible Jewish jargon, which Theresa disliked, even as she rather vaguely disliked Jewish people as a whole, although the treatment accorded her by the Jews with whom she had thus far come in contact had not been worse than that of any other class.

The Eppichs, too, although baptised, had belonged to this race, against which she was frankly prejudiced. It was only shortly before her departure that she learned this fact. The father of her new charges was a small, repressed man, with mild, melancholy eyes, who was hardly ever present except on holidays, when he arrived about noon and at once plunged into a quarrel with his wife. In the afternoons, as Theresa discovered from his wife's contemptuous remarks, he betook himself to a coffee-house, where he played cards until late at night, and gambled away, so his wife asserted, the whole of her dowry.

Theresa wondered why she should complain about being neglected, when she actually had not a moment of the day to spare. All afternoon, she lay on the divan; and all evening, she was "out for a walk," coming home long after the hour when she was expected. Toward Theresa, she behaved quite amiably. Sometimes, she even curried favour with her; at other times, she was violent and impatient, while at all times, her behaviour was characterized by a shamelessness that Theresa often endured with pain.

Theresa intended to give up this position, as soon as the family left their summer home. She therefore took as little pains as possible with the three little Jew-boys, as she called them, and allowed them to play and behave very much as they pleased. And, as time lay heavy on her hands, she would now and then pick up an abandoned novel and, opening it casually, read a chapter here and there.

She once took up one of her mother's books, with no more interest than she felt toward any other novel, for the fragments which she had read of her mother's previous efforts had struck her as being not only dull, but, which was even worse, as being positively ridiculous. Now, she sat in the garden, one afternoon, and read, while some one played the piano. She read apathetically, until suddenly she was deeply moved, she knew not why. It was, after all, a story no different from what might be found in a hundred other cheap novels, so hackneyed, in fact, that she seemed to have read it many times before.

Then Theresa realized why she was so deeply touched. She had been reading the letters of a deceived lover. No wonder they struck her as being so true to life! They were none other, except for some necessary changes due to the plot of the novel, than the letters from Alfred which she had once almost caught her mother pilfering from her drawer.

At first, Theresa felt only that tender sorrow that always overcame her when anything reminded her of Alfred. But then she was seized by a violent feeling of anger against her mother. This mood soon turned to hearty amusement at the thought of how she was, in a sense, a collaborator in her mother's novels. That very evening, she wrote as much to her mother, telling her how flattered she was to have helped a great novelist, even in a modest way.

A few days later, she received from her mother a rather business-like, but quite jovial letter, demanding to know what her daughter expected in payment of her services. And this was followed, two days later, unasked, by the gift of some linen and a white batiste blouse, instead of money. Theresa at first thought of sending them straight back, but reconsidered and kept the things, for it was undeniable that she needed them badly.

LVIII

A FEW DAYS before the contemplated departure for Vienna, Theresa received a letter, asking for a rendezvous.

The signature was that of an officer whose name was totally unknown to her, but in whom she thought she recognized a certain lean, dark-moustached Lieutenant whom she had often noticed in the Kurpark. He was in the habit of measuring her with a peculiarly appraising expression on his face. The officer confessed, unashamed, his deep love, his passion, and his desire, in words that at first aroused her to indignation, but ultimately stirred her deeply.

The whole day, she fought down her own impulses. But that evening, after she had put the children to bed, she could no longer resist, and hurried to meet the Lieutenant in the Kurpark. He was expecting her. As soon as he saw her, he seized her hand in a strong grip and drew her with him along a dark, deserted path. Theresa scarcely knew how it all came about, but she soon found herself answering the passion of his kisses.

He wished to lead her to an even more deserted and remote portion of the garden, but she tore herself free and went home. Only now was she aware of the fact that she had scarcely spoken ten words to the officer during their passionate meeting. She was ashamed of herself. He was to meet her again the next day, but she made up her mind that she would not be there.

She passed an almost sleepless night, during which her desire for the officer mounted to actual bodily pain. At noon, she received a letter from an anonymous "well-wishing friend," warning her to be careful with whom she consorted, for at least one particular officer was here to be cured of a venereal disease, and his cure was still in the early stages. The "well-wishing friend" hoped that this warning had not come too late.

Theresa was panic stricken. She would not leave the house. She was well aware that even last night's kisses might have terrific consequences. She hoped, madly, that God would not punish her with so horrible a fate. She promised that she would never go back to this dangerous man again. In fact, she managed to keep to the house during the next few days, and finally, a violent quarrel with the mother of her charges gave her an excuse for leaving before the expiration of her period of notice. On the way to the station, she saw the Lieutenant in the distance, but managed to slip away before he had noticed her.

Her next employer was a rich manufacturer, in whose house she was not so much governess as nurse to a nine-year-old girl, who was incurably lame and in a gradual decline. Theresa herself was unable to understand why she was so deeply touched with sympathy, not only for the poor child, but for the parents who had been the inconsolable witnesses of this painful tragedy for nine long years, and had been forced to keep up their courage in the face of the realization that there was nothing that they could do. At first, Theresa was prepared to sacrifice herself, along with the parents, in this abyss of sorrow; but she soon realized that she lacked both the physical and the spiritual strength to long endure the strain, and she was forced to leave.

A friendly letter from her mother determined her upon a visit to Salzburg, where she was graciously received. Conditions in the small town had changed very favourably for Frau Fabiani. Society women visited her, and among others, the wife of a Major, who had been recently stationed there, and the wife of an editor, all of whom held the novelist in great esteem.

Theresa felt both more comfortable and, at the same time, more estranged in her mother's house, as if she were not with her mother at all, but with some elderly woman whom she had met somewhere, say during a voyage, and to whom she was now paying a friendly visit.

When Theresa, in the course of their conversations, spoke of her many experiences of the past few years, her mother would listen with great interest, and was not ashamed to take notes, sometimes word for word. She even suggested that her daughter send her similar “true experiences,” for which she would be glad to pay.

Even in Salzburg, things had happened. Count Benkheim, who had once wooed Theresa, and who had finally married the actress he had been courting, had died, leaving his widow a tidy fortune. Frau Fabiani also spoke of Karl who, as vice president of a German nationalistic fraternity, was now playing a more and more important rôle in the student life in Vienna and always cut a figure in political circles, when he visited Salzburg. Frau Fabiani was so proud of her son that she did not seem to consider the fact that he not only did not trouble himself about his sister, but did not even care much for his mother.

LIX

WHEN, DURING THE last days of October, Theresa went back to Vienna, she felt somewhat recovered in health, but spiritually more impoverished than ever. She had parted with Frau Fabiani with a perfect understanding, and now realized more deeply than ever before that she had no mother. Of her three weeks' stay in Salzburg, she remembered with pleasure only her lonely walks and the solitary hours which she had spent in the church, where, it is true, she never prayed, but where she yet felt sheltered and at peace.

Theresa now took a position in the house of a judge in the Supreme Court, who, with his wife, his children, and another person, lived in a small suburban villa. The judge was a silent and melancholy, but withal courteous gentleman; the mother, a kindly, though suppressed creature; and the two daughters, aged ten and twelve years respectively, though not in the least talented, were well-behaved and willing children. Though it was a meagre ménage, nothing absolutely necessary was lacking. Even where human sympathy was concerned, Theresa had her share in the correct measure, so that she need not feel spoiled on the one hand, or quite neglected on the other. In the same dwelling lived a roomer, a young bank official, who had nothing whatever to do with the family. Theresa saw him only for rare, brief moments on the staircase or in the hall. Occasionally, they exchanged comments upon the weather. Nevertheless, she was not in the least surprised — on the contrary, she was rather expecting it — when, one evening, as they met at a very late hour in the hall, he suddenly took her violently in his arms and kissed her. That same night — she scarcely knew whether she had asked or had been asked by him — she spent the night with him. Thereafter, she was with him every night, though sometimes only for fifteen minutes, for she slept in the same room with the two maids and was afraid of arousing suspicions.

With the exception of these moments, she hardly ever thought of him. And when she met him, she scarcely realized that he was her lover. Nevertheless, she now regretted her wasted years, as she phrased it; for, since the deflection of Kasimir Tobisch, she had had no lover.

When she began to notice that he was falling in love with her and began to question her jealously concerning her past, she knew that it was time to break with him. She caused him to believe that the judge's family was becoming aware of their affair; and she acted as if she were deeply afraid of possible consequences, as, indeed, she sometimes was.

One day, she began looking about for a new place, and left suddenly, while he was away at work, without leaving him her address.

LX



THERESA'S NEXT POSITION was with the family of a money-changer of the business section. Here, she had a great deal of time to herself, for the mother of her seven-year-old charge was an unhappy person, who loved nothing better than to spend hours alone in the company of her boy. Thus, Theresa had not only hours, but frequently whole days, in which to go to Ensbach and see her Franz. But more often she chose to walk about the streets of the city, without any set destination in her mind. She excused herself for not going to her child by fancying that the peasant couple, and especially Agnes, with her forward, yet secretive ways, had become absolutely unbearable to her.

It so happened that, one evening, she encountered the handsome, curlyheaded fellow whom she had met, two years before, at the Greitler ball. He declared that fate had brought her to him. So weak-willed was she that, on their next meeting, she was prepared to give him anything he asked for.

He was a law student, impudent and merry, and Theresa fell deeply in love with him, often sacrificing to him the days which she really intended to devote to her child. She often wished that she might talk with him seriously, to tell him more of herself. But he was always so patently bored when she began that she desisted for fear of annoying him with her personal affairs.

Toward the end of the summer, she received a gay farewell letter from him. He said that she had been a grand girl, and that he would always remember her. He hoped that she would likewise remember him. Theresa cried through two whole nights. Then she journeyed to Ensbach, to her child, whom she had not seen for at least a month. She loved him now more than ever.

Before the image of the Virgin Mary on the oak tree, she made a solemn vow never more to neglect Franz. Since Agnes was not at home, she got on very well with the Leutners; and when evening came, she returned to Vienna, feeling much relieved. She was again at peace with herself. It was as if she had been plagued by a great thirst; and now, her thirst allayed, she could once more calmly resume her tasks. But when she began to pay some attention to her pupil, the mother became distrustful; and one day, she even accused Theresa of seeking to steal the child's love away from its mother. This, together with the fact that her husband had recently acquired a mistress, aroused the woman to fits of jealousy that approached an actually diseased condition. Theresa was simply forced to depart. There was nothing else to do.

LXI



NOW SHE FOUND a place in a quiet and very comfortable house, where she hoped she might remain a long time. The owner was a busy manufacturer, whose very activity kept him happy. His wife was a kind-hearted, pleasant woman; and his two girls, just growing out of childhood, were well-bred, tractable, and musically talented children.

Theresa was by this time accustomed to her rapidly changing environment, and knew how to strike the right note between reserve and familiarity. She was careful not to let her heart go out to her charges. She cultivated an attitude of cool motherliness, which she was capable of raising or lowering by several degrees at will. This was the foundation of her relationship to her employers' children. Thus, spiritually, she was free as soon as she closed the door behind her; and when she came back, she was again at once at home.

She now visited her boy regularly, though in the intervals between these visits she was never troubled by any longing for him.

Once, at the approach of winter, when she was going to Ensbach, she found the train crowded, and was forced to take a first-class carriage. An elegant, middle-aged gentleman was the only other occupant. He engaged Theresa in conversation, and informed her that he was going to Germany; and that, having been on a country estate, he was compelled to take this local train for the first part of his journey.

He spoke with great affectation, and constantly stroked his scrubby English moustache with his index finger. She allowed him to believe that she was a married woman; and after all, he had no reason to doubt her word, nor her information that she was on a visit to a friend of hers, the wife of a doctor, who, with her four children, lived all the year round in the country.

By the time she reached Ensbach, she had acceded to the gentleman's plea that she allow him to see her when, in two weeks, he returned from Munich. He kissed her hand in parting.

As she walked over the snow-covered walk toward her familiar destination, she was aware of her lightened step and her heightened self-consciousness. Toward her child, she felt a curious estrangement. At about this time she became more conscious than ever of his speech, which, if it was not actually dialect, at any rate had a peasant accent. She wondered if it were not high time for her to move the lad to the city. Clearly, it was her duty to do so. But how was she to manage it?

She recalled the elegant gentleman in the railway carriage, with his fine fur coat and his yellow gloves. And as she walked into the snow-covered world, she herself seemed almost a married lady, just as she had told him she was. Then, she saw herself in the small, stuffy room, drinking coffee by the light of an oil-lamp, while Frau Leutner gossiped; while Agnes, in her Sunday dress, sat by the stove and sewed, and little Franz painfully spelled out words from his picture book.

Suppose her fine gentleman suspected that she had not gone to visit a country friend, but instead, to see her illegitimate child, the son of Kasimir Tobisch, the swindler?

She trembled and, calling her boy, kissed him and mothered him, as if she were thus making restitution to him for her evil thoughts.

The next two weeks passed with a painful, snail-like pace.

It seemed as if her sole object in life was to see this strange man again. When the moment of their rendezvous approached, she was frightened lest he fail to keep the appointment.

He was there; in fact, he had been waiting for some time. His appearance somewhat undeceived her. In the

railway compartment, she had not observed that his stature was shorter than her own, nor that he was almost bald.

But his words, the very intonation of his voice, again affected her.

She claimed that she had only half an hour to spare; that she was invited to a tea where her husband would meet her, after which they would visit the theatre. He did not insist. He did not wish to be indiscreet, but expressed himself as satisfied that she had come. He apologized for not having sooner introduced himself. He was Dr. Bing, a department head in the Ministry.

"I do not insist, Madame, that you give me your name."

He instantly added:

"I hope you will soon be convinced that you can completely trust me. Then you may give me your name, if you wish."

He then discussed his journey. It had not been a pleasure, but an official trip of political importance. All the same, he had managed, while in Berlin, to see a number of operas. The opera was really his only amusement. Was Madame musically inclined?

"A little," Theresa confessed; but added that she had very little time to go to operas and concerts.

"Of course," Dr. Bing added. He could understand this, what with her domestic duties, family matters, and the like. Theresa shook her head. No, she had no children. She had had one, but it had died. She did not know why she lied, why she sinned and deceived. Dr. Bing apologized for having touched a sore spot in her heart. Theresa appreciated his delicacy as much as if she had actually told the truth.

At a certain corner, she suddenly asked him to leave her and permit her to go on alone. He took his leave of her very politely, and she departed, feeling annoyed with herself for having made a free evening, and then thrown away her chance to do something with it. It pained her; but there was nothing else to be done but to go home.

At their next meeting, one cold winter evening, Dr. Bing invited her to have tea with him in his apartment. She did not hold out any longer than was necessary. And it really did not require the effect of an excellent meal in his comfortable rooms, with the turned-down lights, to bring the adventure to its foreseen and desired culmination.

He asked no questions, and seemed prepared to believe anything that she cared to tell him. Yet, on their next visit, perhaps through fear of once standing revealed before him as a prevaricator, she deemed it expedient to tell him at least a part of the truth.

She was married, she said, but had been separated from her husband for the past two years. After the death of her child, her husband had left her, and despite legal notice, refused to support her. She had therefore determined to earn her living as a governess. The department head kissed her hand, and was more respectful than ever.

They met regularly, once every fortnight; and Theresa was each time happy to go to his well-appointed apartment, with its beautifully shaded lamps, to enjoy the invariably excellently prepared meal which he offered her. The very change in her life which this day brought meant more to her than her lover himself. His voice was still as agreeable as ever; his manner of speech affected her just as delightfully as on the first day; but she could not simulate much interest in the things he told her.

She was most attracted to him when he spoke of his mother, who had obviously been a noble and kind-hearted woman. Concerning the opera, he always spoke in phrases that, it seemed to her, she had previously read in the newspapers. Frequently, too, he spoke of political matters, in a dry, matter-of-fact way, as though he were speaking to a professional colleague of the ministry. He sometimes did this at moments that were

certainly incongruous. In his exceedingly discreet manner, which was not, however, quite free from self-gratification, he had declared himself anxious to augment her material situation with a small monthly allowance. At first, she emphatically declined; but, after a decent interval, she accepted.

On the whole, this was a very calm period in Theresa's career, and it might have been a very happy one, had she not been more than ever aware of the aimless, meaningless character of her life. Sometimes, she felt impelled to reveal all the torments of her heart to her lover. But some inner barrier always restrained her. There were moments when she felt that this resistance came from his side, for she had noticed that he avoided moments of confidences, as if to avoid the annoyance, or perhaps the greater responsibility, that such confidences might entail.

Thus, she was well aware that this affair would soon come to an end, just as she was conscious that, no matter how friendly her relationship to her employers and their children might become, she could never find a home among them.

So she realized the unstable pattern of her life. Even in the presence of her child, she could not feel any sense of security. No, she could not even deny the self-evident fact that Franz was closer to Frau Leutner and to the rapidly maturing Agnes, than he was to his own mother.

Sometimes her soul yearned for some one to whom she could speak of her inner emptiness and her desires. And now and then, when Theresa was in the company of some other governess who confided all her troubles to her, then she, Theresa, likewise wished to be able to speak out concerning the secrets of her own heart. But she never did. Perhaps it were best so. Her acquaintances considered her a secretive and haughty person. The best of them thought to excuse her by saying that, coming as she did from an impoverished family of the nobility, she thought that she merited a better position than she held in life.

In May, after a number of days of worry, interspersed with periods of deceitful composure and hope, she was no longer able to conceal the truth from herself. She was pregnant again! Naturally, her first impulse was to inform her lover. But at their next meeting, an indescribable shyness overcame her as she was on the point of revealing her condition, whereupon she decided not to tell him anything at all, but instead, to rid herself of the child in all haste. Rather death, she said to herself, than another child!

She did not hesitate long, but betook herself to a place where, for a sum of money which she had originally laid aside for a new dress, she was quickly relieved of the source of her agitation. The manufacturer's family were somewhat annoyed that it was necessary for her to stay in bed a few days. Suspicion awakened in their minds, and their attitude became so unfriendly that Theresa felt she could no longer endure their censure, which they no longer took the trouble to conceal.

Without revealing the original cause of her misfortune, Theresa one day communicated the story of her misery to her lover. The latter received her tale unmoved, hardly taking the pains to conceal the coldness behind his conventional and affected responses. She noted this with bitterness; and suddenly, offended beyond endurance, she overwhelmed him with all the unspoken reproaches which had been gathering within her heart during the last few months. Words came to her lips of which, a moment later, she was heartily ashamed.

When her lover, however, acted as if it were his part to forgive her, her indignation burst forth again; and this time, she did not spare him a full recital of the cause of all her calamities. She flung it in his face, and reproached him with having treated her as one hardly better than a street-walker. He was touched by her emotion, and sought, in his crude fashion, to appease her. But all that Theresa could feel in his tender words was his exultation at having got off so cheaply. She flung this at him, too, and tried to leave him; but he restrained her. He kissed her hands, and begged her to forgive him. So they were reconciled, but Theresa realized that this revival of their passion would be of short duration.

A few days passed, and the manufacturer's family, having decided to leave for the country, took this opportunity of discharging Theresa. She breathed freely, once more. It was a day of exceptional beauty, of such beauty that it seemed to her a portent of reconciling grace, when she betook herself along the familiar path to the Leutners' place.

Theresa had brought presents, not only for her boy, but also for Herr and Frau Leutner, and even for Agnes, although she liked the girl less and less. This summer, she proposed to consider more seriously her child's education; although it frequently occurred to her that such plans were to little avail, since she could be with him so infrequently, to offset the peasant and rural influences which surrounded him at all times.

Theresa was repeatedly shocked and astounded to observe in her Franz singular gestures and crude mannerisms, which sometimes amusingly reminded her of Herr Leutner himself. She did what she could to eradicate the worst of his boorish locutions and actions. She tried, too, to assist him in his studies. Naturally, he was still in the elementary stages of reading, writing, and arithmetic; but he learned quickly, although he showed no particular interest in his work.

It would have pleased Theresa if her son had shared her love of the beauties of Nature, but he could not appreciate, as she did, the lyrical splendour of the scenery, the odour of the fields, the flight of butterflies. Always surrounded by these things, he took them for granted; and perhaps after all, it was asking too much of him to expect him to exhibit joy at the sight of what had constituted the intimate atmosphere of his life from the day of his birth. Still, she felt that he lacked sensibility.

She became increasingly aware of the narrow circles in which the Leutners, and the other families of the neighbourhood, moved. To be sure, the people of the community saw each other frequently enough, meeting as they did in the fields, at the inn, and in the church. But there existed no real social life; there was no true communication from person to person, or from family to family. Their conversations were always the same. It frequently happened that Theresa was told the same story of some unimportant event by a dozen different people, over and over again, and usually in the same words and with the same gestures. She herself had long since ceased to be of particular interest to the inhabitants of Ensbach. It was commonly known that she was Franz's mother, and that she held a position in Vienna. She was on friendly terms with every one, and conversed with all the people she met; so much, indeed, that she herself soon fell into the habit of telling the same inane stories over and over again, with the same words and gestures.

In an effort to mitigate her carefully concealed boredom, during the two months she remained in the country, Theresa wrote a great many letters. She entered into correspondence with some of the other governesses with whom she had become acquainted, and, from time to time, she sent cards of greeting to some of her former charges. Her mother, however, was the recipient of her most detailed letters.

Theresa had never told Frau Fabiani of the existence of her child. She merely explained to her that she had gone to the country, in company with a girl friend, in order to enjoy a rest. She was quite certain, however, that her mother suspected the truth, if she were not, indeed, acquainted with all the facts. She did not really care to conceal them from anybody, except her brother. The bond between them had been resumed, to a limited degree, since one day when he had chanced to meet her, and had subsequently paid her a visit when she was employed in the manufacturer's household.

Theresa received several replies to her letters to Doctor Bing. These consisted of short, formal sentences, which were in strange contrast to his glowing perorations and exordiums. They rather disgusted Theresa. Once, she delayed answering him, waiting to see if he would pursue the correspondence of his own accord. But she did not hear from him. And, in her heart, she was glad of it.

LXII

IN SEPTEMBER, THERESA accepted a position as governess to a seventeen-year-old girl — a pale, homely, somewhat simple-minded child, the only daughter of a retired wholesale merchant, whose two sons, the one a lawyer and the other an engineer, shared the house with him. They lived in the first floor of an old, suburban house, a rather dreary, but well-preserved building, in which some modern conveniences — notably, electric lights — had not been introduced. The wholesale merchant, who had been blind for many years, was still a handsome, well built man, and he wore a neat, gray beard. He personally selected Theresa from among the various applicants, because, as he said, her voice sounded like that of a loyal person, and had moved him deeply and agreeably.

Since Berta, the daughter, lacked all ability to supervise the household, this duty fell upon Theresa; and she was pleased to discover in herself a positive talent in this direction. The house was more frequented and much gayer than Theresa had anticipated. The young men regularly received visits from their colleagues; the daughter, Berta, was visited by friends and relatives: and thus the house was constantly filled with a young, lively, often noisy company in whose presence the old man took obvious enjoyment.

Theresa was invited to participate in the social life of these happy people. She was made to feel as one of the family. One of the cousins — a vivacious, arrogant girl — even made Theresa the confidante of her first passion. She claimed that she was in love with the elder of her uncles, the lawyer. But, to Theresa's eyes, it seemed that the girl was equally in love with the other brother, or even with a certain blond soldier, who was a frequent guest at the house.

Theresa was sensible of a certain envy at these confidences, although she would not confess it to herself, since she had vowed that she would never again enter into any relationship which could lead her nowhere. She was weary of being pushed about here and there in the world. She longed for peace, for a home which she might call her own. How many among her acquaintances, with no particular distinction of person or position, had contrived, without much effort, to find themselves husbands! And if they could do it, why shouldn't she?

Only recently, a governess of Theresa's acquaintance, a meagre, rather faded creature, had married a well-situated bookkeeper. Another governess, and this one a person of none too excellent reputation, had married a rich widower in whose house she had been employed. There was no really good reason why she, Theresa, should not be similarly successful!

Her child would not, must not prevent her. After all, was her condition any different from that of one who had been divorced or widowed? Herr Truebner was no longer young; and, moreover, he lacked his eyesight. But he was a stately, yes, a really handsome man, and she had no difficulty in observing that he enjoyed her presence.

He particularly liked to have her read to him, especially from philosophical writings. At first, these bored her immeasurably, until he began to interrupt her with friendly questions, the answers to which he himself provided, in such a fashion that he almost delivered connected lectures to her. Soon, she not only understood, but became thoroughly interested in an otherwise, to her, strange realm of thought.

Occasionally, he questioned her closely regarding her past. With a fair amount of truth, she related to him the history of her youth, of her parents, of her life in Salzberg, and of her many experiences as a governess. She glossed over her affairs of the heart, leaving him to suspect that she had suffered a great deal, and that

once, years ago, she had been “as good as married.”

Herr Truebner did not probe further, but, one evening, between two chapters of a philosophical treatise, he asked Theresa, in a serious but gentle voice, how her child was getting along. She blushed and hesitated. He went on to explain that he had long ago deduced, from the tone of her voice, that she was a mother. Theresa did not answer, and Herr Truebner took her hand and held it for a long time in silence. He did not seek to make her reveal any more.

Some time afterwards, when she came home from some errand and was just mounting the steps, she met the blond soldier on the dimly lighted staircase. As if in jest, he refused to allow her to pass. She smiled and, in the next moment, he had her in his arms, and refused to release her until the sound of an opening door interrupted them. She dashed up the steps without looking back; but she knew all the while that he had already won her.

She felt that it would be useless to protract a meaningless resistance, so, at their next meeting, she gave him an assignation, asking him to promise her only one thing — that he would never reveal their secret to any one.

He promised, and he kept his word. For Theresa, there was a particular charm in sitting across from him in the Truebner house; and in seeing him there, with his eyes still heavy with love and passion, and hearing him address her in the most formal manner. His attitude toward the other girls did not change in the slightest degree. To them, he was still the gallant soldier, bringing them flowers and candy, and, on festive occasions, playing the piano while the young people danced.

No one suspected their relationship... that is, no one, except the blind clairvoyant merchant, who one day took it upon himself to warn Theresa, in his gentle way, of the dangers and deceptions to which young people in her position are exposed. Although Theresa suspected that the old man was not interested in preserving her virtue for her own sake alone, she nevertheless took his warning to heart; and her demeanour toward Ferdinand altered at once. She was no longer the thoughtless, gay creature whom he had formerly held in his arms. She began to bethink herself of duties which previously she had never allowed to stand as hindrances to their appointments. And after another talk with Herr Truebner, in which he spoke, in guarded words, of the frivolity of youth and of the duty of single women to society, Theresa, as if under a spell, felt herself compelled to write a farewell letter to Ferdinand. Three days later, to be sure, they were together again; but both of them realized that the end of their adventure was fast approaching.

One day, early in the spring, as she was shopping in the city, Theresa met Alfred. She had not seen him since that day when she had been in the carriage, with her newborn baby and Frau Nebling, on her way to the station. He stood still, no less pleased than she; and both of them at once began to converse in such an exceedingly friendly fashion that, after a few minutes, neither was able to credit the fact that eight years had passed since their last meeting.

Alfred had hardly changed at all. That little shyness which so specially characterized him was still noticeable, although now it no longer made him appear awkward, so much as reserved. Theresa related to him as much as she wished to of her many experiences, and was silent regarding many things which his eyes seemed to ask her, though his lips spoke nothing. No doubt, he suspected that her affair with Max had not been her last. After all, he himself had grown into a man.

She again experienced that strange conviction that sometimes overcame her, that Alfred was the father of her child. She smiled mysteriously. Alfred’s eyes returned a questioning look. He began to tell her of his life. His two sisters were married. His mother was ill. He himself was to receive his doctorate this summer. Rather tardily, he admitted, but he was not as industrious as many of his other comrades — as Karl, for instance, who

was already an interne, and was surely at the beginning of a great career. If not as a doctor, at any rate, as a politician, he added, smiling.

Did Theresa know that her brother was no longer a Fabiani, but a Faber? Yes, indeed! For one of his strong, pan-Germanic sentiments a name with an Italian sound might one day prove a stumbling-block to his progress and a weapon in the hands of his opponents.

Theresa looked away.

“I hardly ever see him,” she said, casually.

Then she begged Alfred to write to her, as soon as he had become a doctor.

“Not before?” he asked.

She smiled, and extended her hand to him. She smiled all the way home.

Herr Truebner departed somewhat from the type of books which he had formerly preferred. Theresa had to read him some lighter works. Therein, they frequently encountered passages that bore so strong a resemblance to her own life that her voice broke as she read. Once, as she was reading a chapter in a translation of some French memoirs, she was obliged to stop, not only because she was ashamed, but because, due to her emotion, her voice failed her.

Herr Truebner seized her hand and drew it to his lips. Theresa, both frightened and unnerved, made no resistance; whereupon, he became bolder, until Theresa finally had to beg him to leave her alone. She remained at his side in silence for a while; then, she excused herself and left the room.

On the following day, her employer, in his most gentle voice, begged her to forgive him. She was deeply moved. But when he renewed his advances, after an interval of two days, she tore herself loose and shortly thereafter, gave her notice, saying that she had been called to the side of her sick mother.

LXIII

BY VIRTUE OF the excellent recommendations which she received from the Truebners, Theresa was able to exercise a certain choice in her next position. She decided to enter the house of a certain Rottmann family, where the two daughters, aged ten and thirteen, had captivated her by their frank and animated ways. The mother, who was a pianist, and frequently absent for long periods on extended concert tours, became at once almost too friendly with Theresa, and the woman's nervous, capricious manner annoyed her.

As to the father — a serious, somewhat melancholy man of exceedingly youthful appearance — Theresa simply could not understand him. During the first few days, he appeared to be merely a much respected guest, and not really the master of the household. But the whole atmosphere of the house abruptly changed, when Frau Rottmann departed on her tour.

The whole tone of the house was pitched to a gayer note. The daughters acted as if a weight had been lifted from them. The father's melancholy disappeared. The servants obeyed the new governess much more readily than they had ever obeyed their mistress. No one ever mentioned the absent member of the family. No letters ever came from her — only occasional picture post-cards from the German cities where she was performing.

Theresa was happier than she had ever been before. The management of the household and the teaching of her clever pupils kept her both busy and satisfied.

Six weeks later, Frau Rottmann returned, and at once everything lapsed into its former state. Even worse, as far as Theresa could judge from the meagre progress made by her pupils, as compared with the rapid strides which they had made during the absence of their mother. Herr Rottmann again relapsed into his former melancholy.

During August, the family moved to a nearby, very unpretentious resort. Seemingly out of sheer boredom, Frau Rottmann took Theresa into her confidence, and related to her all the various experiences and adventures which she had encountered on her numerous journeys. Theresa would have preferred not to listen but her quite apparent reserve mattered very little to Frau Rottmann. She, as Theresa quickly noticed, was interested only in breaking the monotony of their sojourn in the country; and it mattered little who her audience was, as long as she had an audience.

No sooner had the family returned to the city, than Frau Rottmann ceased her confidences. In the autumn, she went to London, ostensibly to extend her studies with a famous pianist resident in that metropolis. At once, the house breathed freely again. And Theresa felt so perfectly at home in the company of the daughters and their father that she often asked herself if she were not indeed better fitted to be the mother of this household than the wandering pianist.

Herr Rottmann pleased her immensely. She made this much plain to him, and their proximity, together with their constant association in their daily life, did the rest. She became his mistress. Both observed the strictest secrecy, and were careful not to conduct themselves, when in the presence of others, in any way that might betray their relationship.

At Christmas time when Frau Rottmann returned, although Theresa realized the necessity of caution, the manner in which Herr Rottmann seemed to have completely forgotten her existence, angered her beyond endurance. She suffered much on account of his exaggerated wariness; and when his wife left again, after a few weeks, she obstinately refused to permit a resumption of their former intimacy.

But he managed to explain to her the necessity of his actions, and secured his pardon from her, with the

result that their old life was resumed, after all. Sometimes, Theresa caught herself wishing that some anonymous letter would come to inform Herr Rottmann of the manner in which his wife demeaned herself while on her tours. Once, she even dared, in a half jocular manner, to suggest to him the possible dangers that threatened beautiful women, especially artists, on their sojourns in foreign countries. Herr Rottmann, however, appeared not to understand that any reference was being made to his wife.

Frau Rottmann returned a few days earlier than she was expected, and at once exhibited a changed attitude toward Theresa. She shut herself up with her husband and, when she reappeared, summoned the governess, while Herr Rottmann escaped from the house, and abruptly declared that she knew everything. Then she berated Theresa violently, and without sparing her language in the least.

Theresa did not know how to reply. She was mad with humiliation that the man to whom she had given herself could have been such a coward as to leave her alone. Apparently, he had given his wife full authority to act as she saw fit. Frau Rottmann had so managed the scene that her daughters were not at home, and she insisted that Theresa should leave the house forthwith, before they returned.

Theresa went to her room and packed her belongings, overcome with the stupidity of her behaviour. Suddenly, she decided not to leave the house until she had flung into the face of this man and his wife all that she knew of them and that they deserved to hear. But Frau Rottmann had already departed. The servant grinned as she informed Theresa that the couple had gone to the Theatre. Did the Fraulein wish her to fetch a cab and take her things down? No, Theresa replied; she still had something to say to Herr and Frau Rottmann, and would await their return.

She was dressed and ready to leave. Her trunk and her bag were packed, but she waited with compressed lips, while a terrible rage filled her heart. Then the two girls came home, and, finding Theresa prepared to go away, assailed her with questions. Theresa wept, and at first was unable to answer. Then she declared that she had received a telegram saying that her mother was very ill, and that she must return to Salzburg at once.

She arose, kissed the two girls as gently as if they were her very own, begged them not to make her departure difficult, and went below to await the arrival of the servant girl with a cab.

LXIV

LATE THAT NIGHT, she arrived at Ensbach — a discharged, expelled, shamed, unhappy creature, with whom the world was disgusted, and she herself more than any one else. Her boy was fast asleep. In the dark, she could see only the pale glow of his beloved, childish face. She was grieved to reflect that it was two months since she had last seen him. She had belonged to other people, and had been obliged to obey others. Once again, the injustice of her fate oppressed her. She swore that she would never again sacrifice herself to the children of strangers; that she would see to it that her own child no longer had to live with strange people.

For a long time, sleep would not pity her. It was incredible that she had spent the previous night at the Rottmanns'; in fact, in Herr Rottmann's own bed! She buried herself deep in the covers and pillows, as though she could hide her shameful experience from herself. What had come over her in this last year?

In the morning, however, she awoke feeling gay and more refreshed than she had been for a long time. It was like a miracle! A single night away from the city, away from the Rottmanns', had, so it seemed, restored her to health. Was not life an easy matter, so long as such miracles were possible?

Never before had the radiance of the sunlight, the calm of the country-side, made her so happy. If only she might remain here forever! Well, in any case, there were many goodly days of peace before her to enjoy, and now she was not sorry that she had not been too stubborn in her refusal to accept the occasional gifts of money which Herr Rottmann had pressed upon her. These sums would enable her to remain somewhat longer at Ensbach.

Everything about her boy delighted her. Even a certain way that he had of holding his head, which used formerly to remind her, painfully and with uncanny intimacy, of Kasimir Tobisch, no longer disturbed her. She took long walks with him, or she would play with him in the fields. She was young again, almost a child once more; and her son Franz was a child, too, more than he had ever been.

About a week after her arrival, Agnes returned from the city, to pay a visit to her family. Franz received her with wild exclamations of joy; and all during the day, he scarcely bothered at all about his mother, who was made to feel almost like a stranger by his neglect. When Agnes departed, leaving Franz actually miserable and in despair, Theresa felt unreasonably angered against him, as though he were a grown man and answerable to her for a great misdeed. Toward Agnes, whom she had always disliked as an impudent and secretive person, Theresa now felt a veritable hatred.

Her whole attitude was suddenly reversed. She had temporarily rejected the idea of taking her son with her, on account of the present impracticality of the plan. Now she dismissed the idea completely. After all, what could she do, except to make her living educating other people's children, while she left her own child in the country?

One thing, however, she solemnly swore to herself. Never again would she commit a stupidity such as that which had upset the comfortable scheme of her life. Of late, as she well knew, she had become particularly attractive. No matter how economically and how simply she was clothed she knew that she presented a striking appearance. And, despite her modest and even reserved demeanour, there was some gesture or look that she gave unconsciously, that promised things which she had no idea of giving.

She determined henceforth to make better use of the gifts that Nature had bestowed upon her. After her recent experience in the Rottmann family, she felt prepared and fortified to hold herself calculating and cold toward all men, except when it might be definitely to her advantage to be otherwise. She was in

communication with several agencies, and now and again she answered advertisements; but nothing seemed to come of it in the field which she especially desired — employment with a widow with children.

Among the letters which she received, there was one from Alfred. It was the belated printed invitation to his graduation, which had already taken place. The same day, she received a letter from her mother, asking her if she could not shorten her stay with her "girl-friend" — the word was set between quotation-marks — and come to Salzburg for a few days.

To Theresa, this invitation, arriving as it did at that particular moment, seemed like the beckoning finger of fate; for she suspected that Alfred, after his graduation, would have gone to spend some time with his parents. It was the hope of seeing him that caused her to leave Ensbach on the following morning.

LXV



NO. WAS SHE mistaken. On the very first day of her stay in Salzburg, she met him in front of the Cathedral. They took a walk along the same streets which they had traversed years before, to the same park, and indeed, to the very bench where the two officers had once passed, the dark eyed one holding his cap in his hand.

This time, she told Alfred many things concerning her life. She felt that Alfred would understand these confidences. She felt certain that if she had revealed even more, he would have understood. She did not conceal the fact that she had a son nine years old, and Alfred told her that he had known it long since. When he had seen her, that time, riding past in an open coach, he had not failed to observe the old woman with a child in her lap, and he had never doubted that the child was Theresa's. He did not agree with her that it was necessary to maintain such a strict secrecy concerning the child. Of late, people were much more liberal in that respect, and there were many families where her past would surely not be held against her.

They met several times again in the following days, accidentally, and yet they had both been certain that they would encounter one another. Alfred spoke of his interneship in the General Hospital, which he was to assume upon his return in the fall. They exchanged no promises, but when he took leave of her on the day of his departure, they both knew that they would soon see each other in Vienna.

Three days later, Theresa also left for the capital. Her mother accompanied her to the train. She had never been so amiable to her daughter as in the last few days, and yet Theresa felt in her presence some inexplicable resistance which prevented her from disclosing her most intimate self.

When the train was already in motion and Theresa stood at the window of her carriage, her mother suddenly called to her:

"Kiss your little boy for me!"

Theresa blushed, and then nodded to her mother, as if to a newly acquired friend.

LXVI

HER NEXT POSITION was not with a widow, but with a couple who had one child — a boy about the age of Franz. The father, an editor, was a rather young but grayhaired, slender man, who was friendly, abstracted, and generally rather excited. He was in the habit of rising at noon, and did not come home from work until about three in the morning. His wife, petite and graceful like her husband, was the manager of a gown shop, and left the house very early in the morning. Thus, the Herr and Frau Knauer took their meals separately, and at all hours. Yet Theresa had never encountered such a smoothly run household, or such a well-mated couple.

She followed Alfred's advice, and demanded two successive free days each month, so as to be able to spend them with her child at Ensbach. Frau Knauer offered no objections. In fact, her attitude was exactly as Alfred had thought it would be, and she seemed even to take an especial liking to Theresa on this account. Each time Theresa returned from Ensbach, Frau Knauer never failed to ask concerning the child, and she rather liked to talk about it.

Her own child, Robert, was a blond, curly-headed, beautifully built boy — so perfect a child that Theresa could not understand how his parents had begotten him. From the very first moment she saw him, Theresa took the child to her heart and grew to feel for him a greater affection than she had ever felt for any of her charges.

Robert did not go to school, so Theresa had complete charge of his education. She devoted herself to this difficult task with all her soul — so much so, that sometimes she felt abashed at her neglect of her own child; and on such occasions she was especially gentle with him, and rejoiced that her son was, after all, the stronger and more rosy-cheeked of the two, even if he were not actually prettier than Robert.

Nor was he less apt than Robert, though his speech was full of peasant locutions. Nevertheless, in her heart, Robert continually surpassed her Franz; and Theresa suffered thereby, for she realized that this was not the first sin of which she was guilty in her relationship to her child.

One day, when she was out walking with Robert, she met Alfred, whom she had not seen since they were in Salzburg together; and she seized the opportunity to tell him that she wished to speak to him at greater length, as soon as a suitable meeting could be arranged. Very soon thereafter, on one of her free evenings, she met him by appointment, at a place not far from the hospital, and acquainted him with the details of her relationship to her own child and the other one who was superseding him in her heart.

Alfred quieted her conscience, and explained to her that it was quite natural that she could not have the same feeling toward her child as she might have in happier circumstances, for even so fundamental an emotion as mother love required constant renewal by the presence of the living object.

He concluded by expressing a desire to see the child; and so, on their next evening walk, they made an appointment, and he accompanied her to Ensbach on her first Christmas holiday. He sat with the child and together they went through the picture book which he had brought with him. Alfred was friendly, but inquisitive; reserved, yet amiable; and Theresa could not but admire his ability to sound the right note, not only with her son, but also with Frau Leutner and her dull, unsociable husband. In consequence, their visit to the country passed quickly and pleasantly.

On the train, en route for Vienna, Alfred did not conceal from Theresa his conviction that her child was neither in the proper environment nor with the right people. She ought to find some place nearer the city — in some suburb, perhaps — where she could see him more often and supervise his further education.

Before they left the train at Vienna, Alfred kissed her. It was their first kiss since that evening in Salzburg, when they had parted, without suspecting how long it was to be before they should see one another again.

Shortly thereafter, it so happened that Frau Knauer asked Theresa if she would not forego her coming two days off, and instead, invite her son to pass the day in Vienna with them. Theresa was at first reluctant to accept this suggestion. She was somewhat afraid to see the two children side by side.

In her indecision, she turned again to Alfred, who quieted her fears. So, one day, she had Frau Leutner bring Franz to the house. The day passed more pleasantly than Theresa had anticipated. The two boys struck up a friendship at once, and chatted and played together all day long. In the evening, when Frau Leutner came to get Franz, Robert insisted that his new friend should soon return. Frau Knauer nodded her assent, and her friendly comments concerning Franz made Theresa very proud.

It was settled, now, that Frau Leutner was to bring Franz to Vienna, two or three times each month. Robert always received him with great joy, and Frau Knauer took a genuine liking to him. Even Herr Knauer, who sometimes passed half an hour in the children's room, seemed to take to the lad. This was not particularly significant, however, for Herr Knauer was always happy and always quite abstracted. He was always in complete agreement with everybody and everything, and presented everywhere the same superficial amiability.

This gray-haired, unkempt journalist aroused in Theresa a growing sense of strangeness and impenetrability. Sometimes, it seemed to her as if his constant jocularity were a mask behind which he concealed his real self.

Theresa fell into the habit of going over her experiences and opinions with Alfred, and the latter always smiled at her propensity for discovering strange and exceptional characteristics in everything. The two grew more and more intimate. Their meetings were now much more frequent than before, but usually they were very brief, although sometimes they went to the theatre together, and afterwards had supper in some small, inexpensive coffee-house.

Theresa's attitude toward Alfred was now similar to what it had been many years ago. She wished that he were more bold, that he were gifted with a great initiative. But no sooner did he betray any such impulses, than she at once became frightened; as if she feared that, in becoming more beautiful, their happy moments were but fated to end the more quickly.

LXVII

AT LENGTH, ONE evening in the early spring, she gave herself to him, in his bare but exceedingly neatly-kept room in the Alser suburb. In thus becoming his at last, she had a sentiment that she was fulfilling a long-neglected obligation, rather than that she was acceding to any suppressed longing of her own. That night was the first time that she had ever been unable to speak freely to Alfred of the emotions which filled her heart. The thought came to her with an almost physical pain.

Gradually, however, she came to feel more happy when she was in his arms than she had ever in her life been before. Alfred was veritably the first man whom she had ever known, the only man whom she could trust. To all the other men whom, from time to time, she had permitted to enter her life, she had remained relatively a stranger, or at least, a person of ambiguous status, if not merely an easily possessed and quickly forgotten victim. But Alfred belonged to her.

The only thing about his attitude which occasionally offended her was his all too apparent unwillingness to be seen in public with her; a precaution for which he endeavoured to find excuse in the embarrassment which he would feel if he were to encounter Karl while in her company. He sullenly refused to go with her again to Ensbach. She no longer importuned him, since she observed that her requests irritated him.

One of the most pleasant days which Theresa ever experienced occurred the first time Frau Knauer gave her permission to take Robert with her to Ensbach. The sight of "her two children" — as she called them in secret, to herself and, on this occasion, to Frau Leutner — playing together in the fields, made her heart throb with pleasure. Sensing anew of how much she deprived herself by her continued separation from her son, she resolutely determined to take Franz away in the autumn, and thenceforth to keep him near her.

She was able to carry out this plan even earlier than she had thought possible, for she had no difficulty in finding a place for Franz in the family of a tailor, who lived in Hernals. Now, Theresa had more frequent opportunities of visiting her son than she had ever enjoyed before; but she spent all her Sunday afternoons with Alfred, and so saw less of the boy than when he had been far away.

Early the next spring, it became necessary for Theresa to remove her child from the tailor's household, chiefly because of an inveterate ill-feeling existing between Franz and the tailor's eldest boy. This episode involved Theresa in a violent quarrel with the tailor's wife, in the course of which the latter delivered herself of certain vague insinuations regarding various evil traits which Franz had exhibited. Theresa was inclined to dismiss these allusions as mere spite.

She soon found her child a better place in a cleaner house, with the elderly childless widow of a teacher; so that she really had no reason to complain of the failure of her first venture. Franz made fair progress at school. He was always welcome at the Knauers' and no one there seemed to find him wild or unruly. The widow, to be sure, soon made complaints, but not so violently as had the tailor's wife.

These considerations did not touch Theresa as deeply as they should have, and she could no longer deny the fact that the central point of her emotional life was neither Franz nor Alfred at all, but Robert. Her love for this child gradually took on the aspect of a malady. She took care not to show his parents the greatness of her passion, lest they should therein find cause for dismissing her.

Theresa was aware that, although they loved their child, he did not mean more to them than a living and precious toy. It was certain that they did not appreciate him as fully as she did. As for the little fellow, he made hardly any discrimination between his parents and his governess. Like all spoiled children, he took all

their love and idolization as a matter of course.

During the winter months, Frau Knauer became ill of pneumonia, and for a few days, her fate hung in the balance. Theresa assuredly wished her to recover, but there were times when vague, unutterable hopes came to her heart. Although Herr Knauer had never given her the faintest sign which she could interpret as an indication that he might desire her as a wife; although he had remained strange and, in fact, as unlikeable as ever, she knew that, if his wife should die and if he should offer his hand, she would not hesitate a moment to become Robert's step-mother. For the hope of that alone, she would have broken with Alfred — all the more so because, while nothing suggested that their relationship was soon to end, she realized that it had no real permanence.

Frau Knauer recovered slowly and, as a convalescent, made a most attractive picture. She and Theresa had several small quarrels, to which Theresa attached no importance. One day, Theresa was requested to make a certain purchase. She, feeling unwell, passed on the request to the chambermaid. Frau Knauer refused to allow this, and Theresa was led to answer her mistress somewhat harshly. Frau Knauer thereupon suggested that Theresa might leave her employment, whenever it might be convenient for her to do so.

Theresa did not take Frau Knauer seriously. She had become almost indispensable in this house, and how could any one think of separating Robert from her, or her from Robert? Moreover, from that time forward, neither Herr nor Frau Knauer, in their conduct toward her, gave the slightest indication that any change, any estrangement, or any hostility had occurred.

Theresa was on the point of dismissing the episode completely from her mind when, one day, Frau Knauer spoke to her of her impending departure as if it were a foregone conclusion, concerning which there could not possibly be any more discussion. With the most friendly concern, she inquired if Theresa had already found herself another position. She mentioned that she intended to go to the country during the summer, and would try to get on without the assistance of a governess.

Theresa felt certain that the Knauers would want her back in the fall, but she was too proud to say anything about the possibility; and so the days passed without her having taken advantage of the opportunities which they offered her of determining her real status in the household. She was unable to believe that they would deal so cruelly with her as actually to separate her from little Robert. At the last moment, she was sure, they would make some effort to retain her.

She therefore neglected to make any preparations for her departure, feeling certain that, on the morning of the last day, Frau Knauer would retract her words. But the latter only asked her, in a friendly way, if she would not linger long enough to lunch with them. Theresa, on the point of tears, her throat choked with sobs, could only nod. Frau Knauer was doubtless embarrassed at her emotion, for she left the room; then, at once, Theresa burst into tears, falling on her knees before Robert, who was sitting at his own little white table, drinking his breakfast cocoa.

He had been informed, in a vague way, that his Fraulein was going away for a time. He could not, however, understand her violent weeping, nor the cause of the many kisses which she showered upon his hand; but he took it all without astonishment and, feeling impelled to do something in return, bent down and kissed her forehead. When Theresa looked up and saw his cool eyes, she realized how completely selfish he was. She ruffled his hair playfully, wiped away her tears, and began to help him dress, as if nothing had happened.

Then she took him to his mother's room and stood by, with an expression of fixed amiability on her face, while he kissed his mother good-bye before taking his customary morning walk. Theresa chatted with the child, just as usual, and she did not even forget to take a roll along to feed to the swans.

Robert met a few playmates, and Theresa spoke condescendingly to a nursemaid with whom she had struck up a slight acquaintance. She asked herself what it was that made her feel superior to her fellow nurses and governesses. Was she really any better than they? Was she not just as homeless a creature? Were not all of them tossed round the world, from one house to another, even though they gave to their charges the motherly love and attention which the real mothers could not or would not give? And did they ever acquire any rights, even when they loved the child they cared for more than they did their own?

She worked herself into a mood of angry rebellion. Robert was playing about the lake in the comfort-conserving way which was all his own, allowing himself to be caught by his playmates before he was actually tired. Theresa called to him suddenly, with unusual severity. It had become late, and it was high time that they were going home. Robert obeyed at once, indifferently, and the two proceeded homeward.

After the noon meal, Theresa begged Frau Knauer to be allowed to pass the night in her house. Frau Knauer assented at once, but it was noticeable that she considered herself somewhat gracious in doing so. Theresa promised, as though she were in duty bound to do so, to leave the house very early in the morning, without seeing Robert again. Herr Knauer thanked her for her excellent service and hoped that she would come and see them sometimes. She and her boy would always be welcome.

She hastened to meet Alfred in the afternoon, and did not conceal from him the extent of her desperation. She declared that her present condition was simply intolerable, and that she must get into some more stable profession. Alfred patiently explained to her that she would have plenty of time to think things over. At any rate, she ought to devote this summer to recovering her health. She ought to spend a few weeks in Salzburg, and a few weeks with Franz, preferably at Ensbach, where the Leutners would doubtless be glad to welcome her.

Through the veil of her tears, Theresa was conscious of Alfred's indifferent, even bored eyes, that looked past her, just as Herr Knauer's and Frau Knauer's and little Robert's had done. Her astonished glance, revealing her inner torture, did not escape him. He was embarrassed, and tried to be especially tender to her. She accepted his love because she thirsted for it, but she felt that, no matter how long she remained with Alfred, she would always recognize this moment as the beginning of their parting, even though they should continue together until the end of their lives.

Alfred had frequently asked to be allowed to assist her financially. Now, when he renewed his offer, against the exigencies of the next few months, she felt obliged to accept it.

LXVIII



THE FOLLOWING MORNING, she left the house of the Knauers. She went at once to Salzburg, where her mother received her most cordially. It seemed to Theresa as if her mother had rid herself of all the sickly, confused, and unclean parts of her being, those things which had so often pained Theresa, by putting them into her novels. Now, she had become a charming and reasonable old lady, with whom she could get on delightfully, and whom it was even possible to love.

Her mother expressed the desire of settling in Vienna, as soon as possible. Salzburg failed to provide her with sufficient excitement and an adequate outlet for her energies. Moreover, Karl was now engaged, and she dreamed of passing her old age, surrounded by her grandchildren. She made Theresa tell her about the various families in which she had been employed, and she did not attempt to dissemble her curiosity concerning her daughter's most intimate experiences. She confessed that every year it became more difficult for her to find the right words by which to describe the indispensable love scenes in her novels. Would not Theresa help her in her next novel, by supplying the passionate interludes? In any case, she insisted that Theresa should consider the matter, and examine her manuscript.

Theresa complied, but later declared that it would be impossible for her to gratify her mother's request. Frau Fabiani at first took this as pure rudeness; but, soon thereafter, dropped the matter, without cherishing any malice over her disappointment.

A week later, Theresa went to fetch her child from Vienna, in order to go with him for a time to Ensbach. She was determined to love him; and in this she succeeded, because she could not now think of Robert without bitterness, since her heart was so filled with impossible longing for him.

Alfred met her later, and the two set out on a little journey through the lesser Alps of Styria. Theresa enjoyed the excursion immensely. Alfred had to go back to his hospital in Vienna, so Theresa returned alone to Ensbach.

This time, Frau Leutner insisted that she could keep silent no longer about Franz's misdeeds. His stay in Vienna had not, apparently, done him much good. He had become quite intractable and impudent; he had torn up the flowers from the beds at one of the villas and, worst of all, he had perpetrated all sorts of petty thefts. Franz denied everything. It was true that he had plucked a few flowers. And, yes, he had once pocketed a few kreutzers that Frau Leutner had left on the table — but that was only for a joke!

Theresa was unwilling to take these matters too seriously. She promised Frau Leutner that Franz would change for the better, and she brought him to the point where he was willing to ask the kind-hearted old woman to forgive him. She herself redoubled her love and tenderness toward him. She occupied herself with him the whole day, instructing him and going on long walks with him; and it seemed that, within a few days, his whole nature had improved.

One day Agnes came home on a visit, dressed in her most attractive Sunday clothes, and looking four or five years older than her actual eighteen years. Again, Franz received her with delight. She kissed him as if she were his mother, and yet indifferently, and she winked saucily at Theresa as she did so.

At table, she related all manner of gossip about the noble family for whom she worked as a second chambermaid. She treated Theresa as an equal, asked her where she was now "in service," and dropped hints concerning the things which a young and beautiful girl had to put up with at the hands of young, and particularly old, gentlemen. Without doubt, Theresa could tell a great deal about that!

Theresa, incensed, forbade her to make any further remarks. Agnes became sarcastic, and Frau Leutner had to interfere, in order to prevent a quarrel.

“Come, Franz!” Agnes said; and the two of them ran away.

Theresa wept bitterly. Frau Leutner consoled her.

Later, visitors came. Then Agnes and Franz returned, and the latter, just before her early departure, came up to Theresa and extended her hand.

“Don’t be angry,” she said. “I didn’t mean anything!”

And thus peace was reëstablished.

Meanwhile, the time was fast approaching when it would be necessary for Theresa to look about for another situation. She made an attempt to secure an appointment in a school, but was unsuccessful, due to the fact that she had not taken the necessary examinations. She once more determined not to neglect this matter. Meanwhile, she did what she had so often done before — read the advertisements in the newspapers and wrote letters of application to the most promising addresses.

Now, more than ever, this struck her as wretched and pointless. It often occurred to her that Alfred might be of greater assistance than he actually was. The least he could do was to watch for chance advertisements which might interest her. But in all these matters pertaining to her work, he took no interest at all. Nor did he return to Ensbach to seek her.

LXIX

AT LENGTH, THERESA secured a position in the house of a bank director, who had two daughters, aged eight and ten. She had firmly resolved never again to allow her heart and soul to become engaged by her charges. Hereafter, she would always bear in mind the fact that she was a stranger, and she would always make it her business to remain one.

Nevertheless, only a few days had passed when she began to take an interest in the younger girl, who was of an affectionate and pliable nature. To offset this, she resolutely hardened her heart against the elder one.

The bank director was a man of fifty or more, still what one might term handsome, and not without a certain inclination to dandyism. He was in the habit of choosing his words very carefully, and he had a peculiar way of looking at one — almost coquettishly. He had a way, too, of brushing against Theresa whenever he passed her and of blowing his breath down her neck.

Theresa was certain she could have him, if she liked, for his wife was an ailing, rather elderly person, who was not too scrupulous about her appearance. It made Theresa bitter to reflect that this woman could go to bed and rest whenever she pleased, whereas she, Theresa, who after all was a woman, too, had no such privileges and was given consideration by no one.

She remembered an occasion years ago, when she had really been very ill, yet had been forced to go out in terrible weather and fetch the children home from school. After that, she had come near to being very ill indeed. Formerly, she had taken such conditions as the unavoidable accompaniment of her profession; now, she felt quite differently about it, although she could make no open manifestation of her sentiments.

When she spoke of these things to Alfred, he would point out her unjustness and her occasional exaggeration, and would seek by her words to inspire her to a greater kindliness and attention. Then she would accuse him of being the son of a good bourgeois family, and say that, never having known any worries, he had a greater feeling of kinship with a Jewish banker than he had with her. She would declare that he was heartless and egotistical, and sometimes she would even go so far as to accuse him of being the cause of all her misfortunes, because he had abandoned her when she was still a young and innocent girl. Alfred would receive these recriminations with a shrug of his shoulders — a gesture which would make her simply furious. Thus, their meetings became less and less frequent, and were more and more characterized by quarrels and ill-temper.

She found a place for her son in a nearby suburban district called Liebhartstal, where she had arranged with another tailor's family to take care of him. Theresa no longer thought of having her son go to high school, so she took fate as it came, and had Franz apprenticed to the tailor while he was still attending the lower grades.

It seemed to her that he was developing a more agreeable disposition than he had exhibited in the last year. His master was a kind-hearted man, although somewhat addicted to drink; and neither he nor his wife had anything to say against Franz's character or actions. He got on well, too, with the somewhat older son of his new guardians.

One day, Alfred surprised Theresa with the information that he was about to depart for a small university town in Germany, there to study under a famous psychiatrist. He himself seemed to think that their separation would not be for long; but she, although she betrayed her conviction by no sign, realized that the end for them had come. Nevertheless, she now treated Alfred with a tenderness and a confidence which she had not shown

toward him in many months.

In his first letters, Alfred exhibited more candour and joyousness than he had been able to summon at their last meeting, but there was not a hint of love in even the most familiar passages. Theresa, half unconsciously, half purposely, tempered the style of her own letters accordingly.

When summer came, she went with the banker's wife and children to a comfortable villa near Vienna, where she was just beginning to recover her good spirits, under the influence of the friendliness of her employers and the gaiety of the children, when a short letter from the tailor's wife informed her that they could no longer keep Franz in their house.

"Shall I ever have any peace?" Theresa thought. She at once asked for a short leave of absence, made the trip to Vienna and, at Liebhartstal, was hardly astonished at being informed that Franz was "altogether rotten," and that he had led the tailor's son into "all kinds of mischief."

She was told that Franz's teacher wished to speak with her. Theresa went to him and found a clever, friendly little man, who counselled her to take her son back to the country, where he would be in healthier surroundings. Although she was determined not to take anything which her child might do too much to heart, this advice shocked her deeply, and she was unable to rid herself of a feeling of bitter regret that she had not had the courage, while there had yet been time, to seek out the accommodating woman who might have spared her all the cares and vexations which she had since suffered. And a dull anger arose within her, such as she had not suspected herself capable of, against the long forgotten, ridiculous, and almost nonexistent Kasimir Tobisch. She was fully capable, she felt, of doing him physical harm if he should ever again offend her sight.

She conceived the idea of having her son adopted by some childless couple — Alfred had sometimes casually suggested this but each time she had indignantly rejected the idea — and thus be entirely relieved of her trouble. But she had no sooner begun to consider this plan than her mood changed. She was overwhelmed with a motherly sympathy for this poor lad, who was, after all, not to blame for his nature and his fate, and who, in other circumstances, might have developed into a fine and capable young man. She was more conscious of the enormity of her sin than she had ever been before.

She had so often failed her child! She had so often preferred strange children to him — children who surpassed him in nothing, save in the good fortune of having been brought up in better homes, and of being better cared for and more healthfully influenced than her own child.

One hot summer day, as the dust of the city blew through the poor suburb out toward the hills, Theresa sat with her boy on a bench by the side of the street and talked very plainly to him. She thought she saw the light of resolution — yes, regret — in his eyes, and she was suddenly filled with renewed hope. He moved closer to her, and she began to feel that the stubbornness in his heart was beginning to yield.

She ceased to despair and, with sudden inspiration, asked him if he would like, in the future, to live with his mother.

Tears came to her eyes when she heard him exclaim, with genuine joy, that he loved no one but her, and that he could not endure it to be alone with other people. And he would gladly learn more, but his teachers did not like him, and treated him so that he had no desire to please them. It was a lie that he had stolen a piece of cloth from the tailor's wife. Frau Leutner, in Ensbach, had lied, too. His mother should hear what she and Agnes had told Herr Leutner about her. There were lots of things that he could tell.

And as for his master's wife, she was a bitch! Theresa was astounded at her son's language, and forbade him ever to use such a word again. But Franz, not heeding her, went on to tell her of a teamster who often came to the house and what went on then; and Theresa was forced to listen to words and expressions which

she had never heard before. She continually interrupted him, to make him alter his speech; and finally, she was constrained to change the subject altogether.

Her heart was oppressed by a dreary sadness, as she retraced her steps along the dusty street. She still held his hand in hers, but gradually her fingers relaxed and slipped from his grasp, and she was all alone. She took Franz back to the tailor's home for this last night, and herself went to a local inn, after a fruitless search for a place to lodge her son. Before going to bed, she wrote a detailed letter to Alfred, speaking to him openly as to a friend.

The next day, she felt more calm. She was fortunate in discovering a small, neat room for Franz, in the home of a childless couple. She felt then that she had fulfilled her duty to him, and returned to the country. A few weeks of comparative leisure gave her an opportunity of recovering herself. The banker had gone on a long journey. The girls gave her very little trouble. She was scarcely ever disturbed by the banker's wife or his children, and so she passed whole days, reading and sleeping in the shady garden, whose walls shut in the house and its inhabitants and protected them from the harsh world outside.

LXX

IN THE AUTUMN, Frau Fabiani moved to Vienna, where she at first found accommodations in a boarding house. Her son had meanwhile married the daughter of his landlord in a small Austrian city, where he had served for a short time as an assistant doctor. Now he had established himself as a general practitioner in Vienna. Politics, however, still remained his principal interest.

Since he had been relieved of his material cares, Karl had become more genial and approachable, as Theresa was able to note when she once chanced to meet him in her mother's rooms. His young wife, who was also present, proved to be a pretty creature, and sympathetic, if limited and somewhat provincial in her ways. She went up to Theresa at once and, with ingenuous kindliness, invited her to visit her new home.

Thus Theresa, who, a few weeks before, had not the slightest expectation of such an eventuality, had the pleasure of dining in the house of Dr. Faber, as her brother was now legally known. The evening passed perfunctorily and without embarrassment, but Theresa felt little of the spirit of family relationship. After all, she was a stranger everywhere, and this meal *en famille* left her with an unpleasant after-taste.

She did not see her son more often than she had before.

The pensioned official, Mauerhold, who, with his wife, had undertaken the care of Franz, had not done so for any pecuniary gain, but because they had lost their only child a few years before, and longed, in their approaching old age, for the presence of a young person in the house.

It seemed as if their constant thoughtfulness and care exercised a beneficial influence upon Franz's character. Theresa heard nothing ill concerning him, either from the Mauerholds or from his teachers. It did not greatly disturb her that Alfred's letters were constantly becoming more reserved. She had the feeling of satisfaction which arises from duty well accomplished, and from the circumstance that her presence in the banker's house was becoming more and more indispensable by reason of the failing health of his wife.

Sometimes she indulged a momentary thought of the possibility of marrying one of the men who visited the house: the doctor, for instance — an old bachelor; or the widowed brother of the banker, both of whom casually courted her. She knew she might take advantage of these situations, if she were to make some consistent effort to do so. But, in matters of love, she abhorred the idea of employing skill and guile; and so she permitted these opportunities to pass, without once accusing herself for her laxness.

Once, she answered an advertisement for a housekeeper to a well-to-do widower, forty-odd years of age. The answer which she received was so disgusting that she took care never to lay herself open to such an experience again.

LXXI

ONE SPRING DAY, as she was walking with her two girls in the Stadtpark, she met Sylvia, whom she had not seen in several years. She was sitting in the sun with her charge, an eight-year-old boy. Sylvia seemed delighted at meeting Theresa again, and told her how she had passed several years in Rumania, and had only recently had a position on an estate in Hungary. She did not appear changed in the least. She looked just a little faded, but, on the whole, more charming than when Theresa had first known her.

On their next meeting, Sylvia unexpectedly proposed that they should spend their next Sunday together. She had an appointment for that day with a close friend of hers, a student-officer, who wished to bring along a comrade. Theresa glanced at Sylvia with a surprised and almost indignant expression, but Sylvia only smiled.

It was a beautiful spring day. The two governesses sat on a bench near the lake, while the children entrusted to their care fed the swans. Sylvia at once began telling of her affair. She had met her soldier friend the last winter, at a masked ball — yes, she went to masked balls! — and he was a handsome, blond, rather short, and very happy-go-lucky fellow. He would doubtless remain in the service, and not return to his student life, for he preferred the Army to the University. When she had mentioned to him her recent meeting of an old friend, he had at once suggested a little foursome. They would take a row-boat up one of the branches of the Danube. Then they would go somewhere to eat — either on Mount Constantine, or else in their favourite coffee house. Well, there was no point in laying out a programme, for everything would take care of itself. Theresa declined. Sylvia insisted, until finally they agreed to let the weather decide for them.

When Theresa awoke, on the morning of the following Sunday, and saw the sky covered with dark clouds, she was somewhat disappointed. In the afternoon, however, the weather cleared up, and Sylvia came at an early hour to fetch Theresa. The two proceeded to the Prater Circle, where the two gentlemen awaited them smoking cigarettes, near the monument of Admiral Tegethof.

They greeted the ladies with consummate courtesy, and really looked quite elegant in their uniforms. Practiced gallants, thought Theresa; and, at first glance, the short, blond fellow who was Sylvia's lover, pleased her rather more than the other. The second man reminded her of Kasimir Tobisch, by his spare figure and his long, sallow face. He wore a dark moustache and a small beard, such as the Austrian student-officers and officers in general were certainly not in the habit of affecting. His slender, almost too thin fingers held a peculiar, inexplicable fascination for Theresa.

Both gentlemen thanked her for having come. Sylvia at once led the conversation, in her lively and joyous way. Every one spoke French. The blond fellow was very fluent. The other spoke with difficulty, but his accent was meticulously correct.

They walked down the main road, but the crowd was so great — its odour none too good, as this man added — that they soon turned into a by-path which led beneath tall trees with delicate green foliage to a quieter section of the park. The blond officer recounted some experiences which he had had while shooting in Hungary, on the estate of a nobleman, whose guest he had been the year before. Sylvia mentioned the name of an aristocrat whose acquaintance she had made during her stay in Hungary. Her friend ventured a bold insinuation, which she received with bursts of laughter, replying in kind.

Theresa and her escort remained somewhat in the rear. He spoke to her of more serious matters, in a low voice, which at times struck her as being intentionally mysterious. He had allowed his monocle to fall out of his eye, and looked ahead with an indifferent air from under his reddened eyelids.

He found it difficult to believe that Theresa was a Viennese. She looked so much more like an Italian — yes, a chestnut-brown Italian, from Lombardy. Theresa nodded, not without pride. Yes, her lather was really ol an old Italian family, and her mother had come from the Croatian nobility. Richard expressed surprise that she should be a governess. Surely, there were professions better suited to one of her birth and capabilities. With her brilliant eyes and dark complexion, she would have gone far on the stage. In any case, he was at a loss to comprehend how any one could choose such a servitude of her own free will, since certainly she had not been forced to undertake it.

Theresa was again strongly reminded of Kasimir Tobisch, who, years ago, had employed the very same words. She looked away, and Richard went on, in still more emphatic fashion:

"To have only a few hours of liberty, every holiday! It is positively incomprehensible how any one can endure such an existence!"

Theresa felt the passion beneath his speech, although he had not shown any emotion on his face.

They had coffee and cookies on Mount Constantine. The two men made several sarcastic remarks at the expense of the "low" people at the other tables. Theresa did not see anything particularly wrong with the crowd about her. It occurred to her that their escorts forgot that the two poor creatures with whom they were sitting must likewise be considered among the lower multitude.

They descended the hill and rented a row-boat at the lake which lay at the foot of the hill. Theresa could feel that the gentlemen considered it rather sport to mingle thus with the lower classes; a kind of patronizing condescension on their part, to be willing to row their boat along among the many other boats in which were the inferior creatures. Gradually, they pushed their boat into one of the narrow branches of the river which serpentined along through the meadows between the green shores.

Sylvia smoked a cigarette, and Theresa, who had not tried one since her evenings in Salzburg among the officers and actresses, made another attempt, but liked it no better than she had before. Her escort, observing her distaste, took the cigarette from her fingers and smoked it himself. He ceased rowing, leaving the job to his blond comrade. It would do the boy good, he remarked, what with his tendency to lay on flesh.

On the shores, beneath the lofty and ancient trees, lay amorous couples and family groups. Presently, they came to a lonelier and more quiet stretch. Finally, they went ashore, securing their boat to one of the posts provided for the purpose along the shore. Then they walked on further through the bushes, which became thicker and thicker, toward the meadows. They went two by two, clinging to one another. They crossed one broad road, and then at once found themselves in a path that brought them with surprising rapidity into what seemed the far-removed heart of a deep forest. It was magical!

Sylvia went on with her blond friend. They were holding each other closely. Richard suddenly stopped and kissed Theresa passionately on the mouth. She made no resistance whatever. He began at once to talk very seriously, as though what had just happened had no particular meaning. At a casual question from Theresa, he began to tell about himself.

He was studying law, and was going to be a lawyer. Theresa expressed surprise. She had thought that he wished to become a professional officer, like his friend. He shook his head, almost contemptuously. He was not even considering that idea. Besides, a military career necessitated a great deal of money, and he was really quite a poor devil. That was not to be taken too literally, to be sure; but, in comparison with his blond comrade, he was a beggar. Far ahead, the loud laughter of that fortunate gentleman was audible.

"Always jolly," Richard observed, "and for all that, he has a fixed idea that he is melancholy!"

A young couple went past them. The girl, a well-dressed, pretty blond, stared at Richard with such evident pleasure that Theresa felt flattered.

A cool, moist, sweet-odoured breeze was wafted to them from the near-by stream. The path grew fainter and fainter, until it disappeared. They had to push the branches out of their way. Sylvia gaily called back to Theresa:

"A la fin je voudrais savoir, où ces deux scélérats nous mènent," she cried.

But Theresa had lost all sense of direction. Now and then, they could see the river, glistening through the bull-rushes; and then, at a turn, they had lost sight of it again. From somewhere came the long, drawn-out whistle of a locomotive. Close by, an invisible train rattled over a bridge. Theresa had the feeling that she had lived through all this once before, she could not remember where or when.

Sylvia and her escort had quite disappeared, though one could still hear occasional laughter, giggling, and low cries of simulated resistance. Theresa could almost feel the frightened expression of her face. Richard was looking at her, smiling. He threw down his cigarette and stepped on it. Then he took Theresa in his arms and kissed her. He held her tightly, while he penetrated further into the bull-rushes and finally drew her down with himself.

To her surprise, Sylvia's laughter now sounded quite close. With terror in her eyes, she looked up at Richard and shook her head vigorously. His face was dark and strange.

"No one can see us," he said.

She heard Sylvia's voice again, asking her a bold, shameless question. How dare she! Theresa thought. But, suddenly encircled by Richard's arms, she heard herself answering. She heard her own voice uttering words almost as loose and impudent as those which Sylvia had spoken. What has happened to me? she wondered.

Richard brushed back the hair from her moist brow and whispered delicate and passionate phrases into her ear. Far away in the distance, a wagon rattled over the cobblestones. She could not see the river, but the dark, blue sky overhead appeared to her as some strange reflection of the Danube.

Later, when they had emerged from the thicket and again found the small path, she nestled close to her companion, whom she had not known three hours ago, and who was now her lover. He spoke of unimportant matters.

"The races are over, I suppose. They are the first that I have ever missed!"

When she looked up to him, as if hurt, he stroked her head and kissed her gently on the brow.

"Are you sorry?" he asked. Then he added: "Silly girl!"

They left the meadows and approached the broad avenue where carriages and cabs went by, veiled in dust. They reached the river, found their boat, and rowed back to the place from which they had started. Theresa was at first afraid, lest she should discover some indelicate or frivolous reflection in Sylvia's eyes; but, to her pleasant surprise, Sylvia was unusually serious and calm.

Her friend began to talk bravely of a voyage which the four of them might easily take during the coming summer. All of them realized, of course, how idle his chatter was. Richard even did not hesitate to condemn travel in general. He could not endure the unpleasantness invariably connected with any change of location; and, worst of all, there was the spectacle of strange faces. His comrade returned that he had no particular affection for acquaintances, as it was. Richard made no reply.

Sylvia insisted that there were, nevertheless, moments in one's life that were worth the trouble. Richard shrugged his shoulders. That did not alter matters. Fundamentally, everything was sad. Beauty, more than everything else; and for that reason, love was the saddest thing of all. The truth of his observation struck Theresa deeply. She shivered slightly, and tears came to her eyes. Richard put his small, cool hands on her forehead. It was growing quite dark when they reached their starting-point, landed, and found themselves

among crowds along the avenue. The broad street was still jammed with carriages. The music of a dozen orchestras on every side of them mingled together. All the inns were crowded. The two couples walked on into a quieter section, and presently reached the same modest restaurant where, years ago, as a princess or a lady of the court, Theresa had sat with a ghost — or was it a fool?

She recognized the waiter at once. He looked absolutely unchanged as he rushed from one table to another, just as she remembered him, almost as if he were the only person in the world who had not felt the passage of years. Am I only dreaming this? Theresa wondered again; and she glanced quickly at her escort, in order to assure herself that it was not Kasimir Tobisch with whom she stood. And she looked again at the waiter, who, with his napkin dangling from his arm, was running from table to table. How many Sundays since that one! Theresa thought. How many couples have been here since then; how many so-called blissful hours; how much actual misery; how many children, legitimate and illegitimate! And again the whole stupidity of her fate, the total incomprehensibility of life in general, oppressed her. And the young man who was beside her was, strangely enough, the first person who had at once instinctively understood her, although they had spoken not at all of the indecisions of her heart. And she felt nearer and less a stranger to this man, to whom she had given herself in the very first hour of their acquaintance and who did not despise her for her weakness — she was certain of this — than she had ever felt toward Alfred, or any other man.

They stopped at one of the more quiet inns for their evening meal. Theresa drank more than she was accustomed to, and soon became so weary that she could hardly keep her eyes open, and the conversation of the others became only a murmurous drone in her ears. She was anxious to tell her friend of the things which had come into her mind a short time before, but no opportunity presented itself as they walked homeward.

The separation took place abruptly. The gentlemen remarked that they were due at manoeuvers at four o'clock in the morning, so, at the very next cab stand, they put the ladies in an open carriage. Richard paid their fare in advance. Another appointment was rapidly agreed upon for the Sunday following the next. Richard politely kissed Theresa's hand and said "Au revoir"; and as he did so, she noted, with wide, frightened eyes, his cool and distant glance.

On the ride homeward through the deserted streets, she let Sylvia speak. The latter was suddenly overflowing with undesired confessions. Theresa scarcely listened. A bitter after-taste remained with her. She thought, with curious compassion, of her lover; and it seemed to her as if they had parted for ever, as if he were already far away.

LXXII

A FEW DAYS later, a letter from Herr Mauerhold begged her to pay him and his wife a visit, at her very earliest convenience. Theresa had not seen her Franz for three weeks, and she fell at once into a state of violent excitement. Herr Mauerhold received her in a most cordial fashion, but it was plain that he was embarrassed. He declared, after some hesitation, that, in view of the fact that he and his wife intended to leave Vienna and settle in some small town of lower Austria, he was obliged to ask Theresa to take her child away.

Theresa drew a sigh of relief. She expressed the idea that it might be better for Franz to be out of the big city and in some small country town, and she declared her willingness to have the boy remain with them even after their removal. Her son seemed to be getting on with them so well!

The couple's embarrassment was now very plain, and Theresa had to urge them not to conceal the truth from her, before they would inform her that Franz had recently perpetrated a small theft. Thereupon, Frau Mauerhold, who had thus far kept silent, burst out into a long complaint. Franz's thefts were not the worst thing. The boy had all manner of bad habits and disagreeable ways, of which she would rather not say anything. There were complaints from the school, too. He went about with the very worst boys of the neighbourhood, stayed out until all hours of the night, and there was no surmising what the eleven-year-old boy would eventually come to, if he showed such reprehensible traits so early.

Theresa sat with bowed head, as though she herself were the accused. Well, yes, she realized that her proposal to have them keep the lad was impossible. She would wait until he had returned from school, and take him with her immediately. Herr Mauerhold, first glancing at his wife, expressed the opinion that there was really no necessity for such haste. They would not mind keeping the child for a few days more, while Theresa looked about for a new home. Theresa was surprised to see tears in the good man's eyes. It was his turn now to console Theresa. He had known many children who had been worthless rascals at this critical age, but had eventually developed into quite respectable people.

The hour at which Franz should have returned had long since passed. Theresa had asked for only a short leave, and could wait no longer. She thanked the Mauerholds, and promised to look round at once for a new place for Franz. On the way home, she became more calm, and decided to consult some one on her predicament. But whom? Ought she take her mother into her confidence? Should she write to Alfred? What could they do for her? No, she had to decide everything for herself. She alone could solve her own problems.

The next day, however, she chanced to meet Sylvia in the Stadtpark; and, though she was the last person whom Theresa would have chosen under other circumstances to take into her confidence, in her present anxiety she was glad to find a compassionate soul. She poured out her heart to her friend. She told Sylvia more than she had ever told anyone.

Fortunately, Sylvia proved to be a kind, resourceful, and helpful person in this emergency. She urged Theresa to give up her present position, and not to undertake similar work any more. Instead, she was to take a small furnished apartment and give private lessons. Sylvia pledged herself to find her a few pupils very shortly, and in the meanwhile, she put herself and her means completely at Theresa's disposal. She always had "a little something" put away, she declared, with a roguish smile which Theresa did not much like to see. Nevertheless, she thanked Sylvia for her advice and for her offer.

And so, with new industry and energy, she at once set to work to put the new plan into operation. The banker's family received her notice with great surprise. The two girls were both sorry to see her leave, and the

eldest especially, wept disconsolately. Theresa's heart was touched to see how, without having suspected it, she had aroused so great a love in the young girl.

LXIII



ON A SULTRY day in August, Theresa and Franz moved to the two furnished rooms and kitchen which they had rented. The rather new and modest, but neatly-kept house where they began their life in common was situated in an easily accessible, but quite suburban street.

Before making this move, Theresa resorted to every possible device to secure a few pupils, and in this she had been successful, by dint of answering advertisements, by approaching all the families where she had formerly held a position, and largely through Sylvia's aid. At the worst, these pupils assured her against starvation. The banker's wife had given her a small sum of money as a parting gift, and this came in most handily in her emergency.

It really meant a great deal to Theresa to find herself, for the first time in her life, in the possession of a home. It seemed to her that all her son lacked for his proper development was a life in common with his mother. The school which he now attended was so far distant from his former one that the possibility of his meeting old acquaintances was slight.

As usual, he did not behave badly during the first few weeks at his new residence. To her, it seemed almost as if she were just beginning to learn to know her child. Certain of his childish traits, which had disappeared too early in his life, now gradually reappeared. And was it not delightful to sit down to a noon-hour meal with him, a meal which she herself had prepared; and how marvelous to come home in the evening, after her lessons, and to be greeted by his wild embraces! Her heart swelled with pride when he asked her assistance with some difficult passage in his home-work.

She felt satisfied, almost happy. She began to write to Alfred again, urged by some inner need for some one to confide in. She told him in detail of her new life; and he replied, announcing his approaching return to Vienna, where he was to be an assistant doctor in a psychiatric clinic.

LXXIV



ONE DAY, THERESA was surprised at receiving an invitation to dine with her brother. It had been a year since she had heard from him. She found two guests there — a young doctor, and a professor in a gymnasium — both, as the conversation indicated, political friends of Dr. Karl Faber.

Karl led the conversation. The other two, even the professor, who was at least ten years older than he, listened respectfully. Theresa felt that her brother somewhat hoped to impress her with his importance in his party.

Her sister-in-law, who had become a mother a few months before, left the table at the conclusion of the meal, while Theresa remained in the company of the gentlemen. The conversation became more friendly and intimate, and soon passed to the subject of Theresa's profession and her experiences as a governess and teacher. The professor did not conceal his regret that Theresa had been obliged to serve in a subordinate capacity, almost as a servant, in the houses of strangers; and he declared that the law ought to prevent such situations, once and for all time. The professor spoke clearly and precisely, in contrast to the young doctor, who continually lapsed into stuttering. Theresa's brother, however, though he now and then nodded with approval, often glanced sarcastically in the professor's direction. Theresa long remembered the crafty, malicious expression in his eyes.

She had not heard from Richard in weeks — months, in fact — and she was almost happy to be able to forget him, when she received a letter from Sylvia, inviting her to go out "avec nos jeunes amis de l'autre jour." Her first impulse was to decline. She was accustomed now to spending all her evenings at home with her son. But Sylvia came to her in person to repeat the invitation, and Theresa allowed herself to be persuaded.

The evening began calmly enough but became more and more wild as it proceeded, and ended in the most flagrant manner. When Theresa came home, early in the morning, she found her son sleeping peacefully in his bed; and this she took as an unexpected and unmerited stroke of luck. Neither she nor Richard had anything but good feeling for each other, yet she determined never to see him again.

The invitation to her brother's house was repeated, now and then, and there Theresa often encountered the professor, who now adopted a clumsily gallant attitude toward her, and would not be denied the privilege of accompanying her all the long distance to her home.

A few days after one of these meetings, her brother acquainted her with the fact that the professor was very much interested in her, and would very probably declare his intentions with due formality on the next appropriate occasion. His brotherly advice was not to reject him with too much finality, even if she found herself bound elsewhere at the moment.

"I am not engaged," Theresa replied, curtly and severely.

Karl did not seem to notice her tone, and went on to explain that the professor was well liked by his superiors, and would doubtless soon be appointed director of a gymnasium in some fairly large city in the provinces.

"And," he added, "so as to consider everything while we are at it, I may remark that the difficulty which you are thinking of would not stand in your way."

Theresa felt the blood mounting to her cheeks.

"You never bothered about my thoughts before. Why should they interest you now?"

He did not seem to heed her anger. Undisturbed, he pursued his argument.

"The matter could be explained thus: you were once married, but it developed that the marriage was illegal. Such cases actually do happen. You are, so to speak, absolutely innocent."

He blinked past her.

Theresa objected.

"I will be responsible for what I have done, and I will never deny my child. I would never have denied him to you, either. But did you ask me?"

"You needn't become excited. It is exactly for the reason that you need not deny your child that I thought of the illegal marriage. You ought to thank me!"

Before she could reply, he went on, vehemently.

"Your mother would certainly be glad to know that your circumstances were more assured!"

Theresa reflected quickly. Why not? The man proposed by her brother she regarded with indifference, but she by no means despised him. Did she not owe it to her son not to allow such an opportunity to pass? Her brother began to set forth the advantages of such a marriage. The position of her husband would enable her all the better to pursue her own profession. She need not give it up. On the contrary, a professor was exactly the right man for her.

Her sister-in-law entered at this moment, carrying her child in her arms. Theresa took it, and recalled the first weeks of her own son's life — those piteous, scanty hours when she had been able to press him against her breast. And she thought that, in her new, real marriage, she might have another child and enjoy to the full the happiness which had been denied to her when Franz had been born.

Then it occurred to her that her thoughts were unjust and disloyal to her son. All the other injustices that she had been guilty of in her actions toward her son rose in her mind. Tears came to her eyes, even as she still held her brother's baby. She felt incapable of pursuing the conversation, and left the house in a painfully disturbed condition.

A few days later, she accidentally met Richard. In his civilian clothes, he appeared very elegant, and yet as though he had come down in the world somewhat. His overcoat fitted him perfectly, but the velvet collar was a little worn, and his well-made shoes were cracked. His monocle was fixed immovably in his eye. He kissed her hand and asked her, almost without any preliminaries, if she would not spend the evening with him. She declined. He did not urge her, but on the chance, gave her the address of his parents, with whom he lived. She wrote to him the very next day.

It was a strange meeting. She did not really understand why he had insisted upon dining in a private room of an exclusive restaurant, for he acted very reserved and scarcely even touched her hand. She liked him all the better for that. He spoke a great deal about himself. His understanding with his parents was not of the best. His father, a well-known attorney, was generally dissatisfied with him. He was quite right, too. He had never gotten on with his mother. He casually termed her a silly goose, which rather frightened Theresa. He was soon to undergo a third state examination, and he asked himself what it was all about. He never intended to be a lawyer or a judge.

He had no serious ambitions at all. That was because he really had no particular talent, and nothing in the world amused him very much. Theresa observed that his remarks did not correspond with his nature. If he was so indifferent to the whole world, how could he attach as much importance as he obviously did to the selection of his necktie?

He looked at her with a certain pity, which wounded her; and she experienced a burning desire to convince him of the fact that she was quite capable of understanding such seemingly conflicting characteristics. But she

could not find the right words.

After the meal, he took her home in an open carriage. They had not been together for more than an hour. He kissed her hand very politely, and she was sure that she would never see him again.

Nevertheless, she received a letter from him within a few days. She was more delighted than she had thought she would be to receive an invitation from him. This time, he was an entirely different person. He was gay almost to boisterousness and, for the first time, he exhibited a little interest in her personal life.

He made her tell him of her youth, of her parents, of her seducer, and of her other lovers. She also revealed to him the existence of her child, and confessed that she frequently neglected her duty toward her boy. He shrugged his shoulders almost angrily. There were no duties, he declared. No one owed anything to any one else. Children owed nothing to their parents, and parents nothing to their children.

The whole business was a fraud. All people were egoists; only, they would not confess it to themselves. Besides, what he chiefly wanted to tell her was that he had won at the races what to him was quite a sum of money. That ought to interest her more than anything else.

What he proposed to do, after this stroke of good fortune, was to follow up his luck at Monte Carlo the coming winter. He had thought up a system of breaking the bank. After all, money was the only thing worth having. Money gave one power over people. When you possess it, you can put people in their places. And she was to come with him — to Monte Carlo. She would get along there; she could be sure of that, though not as a teacher, of course!

She spoke against his plans, but could not prevent the charm of the adventure from wholly enthralling her. And she was very happy that evening.

A letter from Alfred, which arrived the next morning, completely destroyed her mood. The world appeared dull again, and the future dismal. She had told him of the probable proposal of marriage from the professor, and Alfred urged her to consider the matter carefully; but from the way he worded his letter, it was plain that he would not be sorry to see her married and himself freed from any responsibility which he might have incurred in consequence of his affair with her. Theresa replied to him in a cold, almost sarcastic letter.

LXXV

SHE CONTINUED TO be tolerably contented with Franz. Whenever she came home, she invariably found him seated and pondering over his hooks and notes. Of his early unruliness, but little remained. If he occasionally showed a tendency to cast politeness aside, or forget himself, a warning on her part generally sufficed to convince him of his error. She was accordingly most disagreeably surprised when, at the end of the school term, he brought home his report card which, in addition to having very low marks, showed that he had missed no small number of hours at school. There, to her dismay, she learned that, during the past several months, he had attended classes only sporadically. The class instructor brought forth written excuses bearing her signature.

Theresa was careful not to admit them to be forgeries.

She, on the contrary, maintained that her boy had been ill this year; she took it on herself to see that he caught up with his studies. All she asked on their part was patience.

At home, she took him to task. He was at first stubborn; then, he proved impudent; finally, he simply fled from the room and house. It was late at night when he returned and immediately flung himself on the couch in the living room that served in place of a regular bed. His mother sat nearby, entreating him to reveal to her where he had been during his absence. He refused to answer, sullenly staring at the wall. Only now and then she intercepted a sinister flash from his eyes, a look in which Theresa this time recognized not only stubbornness, not only a lack of understanding and a poverty of love, but bitterness, derision, and even a hidden reproach, which he might not wish, out of a last vestige of respect for her, to utter.

And from this sombre glance, a memory, far-off and blurred, returned to her. She strove to dispel it, but ever it loomed nearer, growing more living. Now, for the first time in a long while, she bethought herself of the night when she had given birth to him — that night when she had first supposed her new-born babe dead, had wished him dead. Wished — had she only wished? Her heart froze with terror, lest the boy, who had turned away and pulled the covers up over his head, might again penetrate her with his knowing, hating, deadly glance.

So she rose, stood trembling for a short space, her breath held tight; then tiptoed into her room. Now she was certain that this child, this twelve-year-old boy, not only lived as a stranger, but as an enemy beside her. And never before had she at one and the same time realized how unhappily she loved him, and yet how forlorn was any expectation on her part of her boy returning that love. Still, she could not yet abandon him as lost. All that she had neglected to do, her every act of thoughtlessness, her wrong and guilt — these things she must rectify, must atone for. She must be prepared for sacrifices far more difficult than any that she had yet made. And if she could find the opportunity to provide him with better surroundings than he had yet known, the possibility of entrusting him to fatherly supervision, she had no right to hesitate. The sacrifice — was it, after all, so tremendous? Might not such a marriage bring salvation to herself, as well?

So that, when Professor Wilnus, purposely left alone with her after lunch, on the occasion of their next meeting at the house of her brother, asked Theresa if she would marry him, she first hesitated an instant, then, steadily regarding him, asked:

“Do you know me well enough? Do you know who it is that you propose to marry?”

With an embarrassed nod, he awkwardly reached for her hand. She withdrew it, and asked:

“Do you know that I have a child, a rather difficult boy of almost thirteen? Whatever gossip you may have

heard, the truth is that I was never married."

The professor frowned; he blushed, as if some one had related a bawdy joke. But he quickly recovered his poise: "Your brother told me something," he said. "But he gave no details. Yet, I can say that I expected something like this."

He paced up and down the room, his hands behind his back. Then he stopped before her. With well chosen words, as if in walking he had studied a little speech, he made her a definite proposal. Under no circumstances must the fact of a child interfere with their future.

"What do you mean by that?"

He explained. There existed childless couples who desired nothing better than to adopt some child. And if they carefully...

She interrupted abruptly:

"I shall never part with my child!" she exclaimed, her eyes flashing.

The professor, silent, reflected. After several seconds, he remarked, in a clear, noble voice, that he would first like to meet the boy. They might then discuss matters again.

Her first instinct was peremptorily to refuse, and not accept him under any conditions. But her recent resolution soon reverted to her mind; and she declared her willingness to receive the professor the following evening at her home.

Franz she succeeded in detaining; he was on the point of leaving the house, unobserved, as he usually contrived to do at this hour. The professor made his appearance, only faintly concealing his embarrassment under a gay and forcibly worldly manner. Franz contemplated the visitor with obvious distrust. And when he suddenly and surprisingly declared his wish to examine Franz's school report, it was no easy matter to overcome the lad's resistance. That which the eyes of Professor Wilnus beheld was not too favourable. But he was gracious enough to express his displeasure through words of humorous understanding. He next tried to ascertain the extent of the boy's knowledge; he asked all manner of questions, supplying the answers, too, by practically putting them in his mouth; and, in general, comporting himself like a teacher who, for reasons of his own, is anxious not to fail a sorry pupil during the examination.

What he most strongly objected to was Franz's pronunciation, which he characterized as a mixture of suburban dialect and peasant speech. When he casually hinted at his connection, and ventured the possibility of placing the lad in a monastery school in upper Austria, Franz bolted from the room.

His mother knew that he would not soon return. She excused him to the professor. It was his habit, she explained, to spend his evenings in the open with his comrades. The professor appeared to be relieved to be alone with Theresa. She wished to hear no more of the school; and, at last, definitely answering the cautious hint of the professor that it might be possible to find adoptive parents for the boy, she resolutely declared that under no circumstances would she consent to part with her son.

The professor seemed inclined toward leniency. His eyes began to shine. Moving closer to Theresa, he ventured on boldness. Each moment, he became more ridiculous and obnoxious to Theresa. She was wondering whether or not to show him the door, once for all, when there was a knock. To Theresa's surprise, Sylvia, who for weeks had failed to put in an appearance, entered. Following the casual introduction, the professor expressed the hope of seeing Theresa the following Sunday at the house of her brother, and left.

Sylvia was pale and excited. She hurriedly asked Theresa if she had read any of the papers that day?

"What has happened?" Theresa asked.

"Richard has committed suicide!" Sylvia replied.

"For God's sake!" Theresa exclaimed, helplessly letting her hands fall on Sylvia's shoulders.

She had not seen Richard for so long! And with eyes downcast, Sylvia confessed that she had seen him quite frequently. Theresa felt no twinges of jealousy, no real pain. Suddenly, she felt a certain superiority! It was she who must console her friend! She stroked her head and caressed her cheeks. Never had she felt so sisterly, so close to another person.

And Sylvia went on to tell her story. The thing had happened in the early hours of the morning. He had spent the night with her. He had been in particularly high spirits, had escorted her to her door in a carriage, waved to her from the window of the vehicle, and then, while being driven to the Prater, had in that self-same carriage shot himself. She had been expecting this a long time.

"Debts?" Theresa inquired.

No. He had recently been a steady winner at the races. But life disgusted him. People, rather. Almost all people.

"He liked you, Theresa, very much," Sylvia said. "Much, much more than he did me. Do you know why he did not wish to see you any more?"

In great excitement, Theresa took Sylvia's hand and looked questioningly into her eyes.

"'She is too good for me!' Those were his words. 'Trop bonne!'"

Then they both wept.

They entered the church two days later for the consecration. After the ceremony, the funeral procession passed Theresa, who was seated on a bench, far in the rear. Richard's mother, a thin, pale woman in whose reserved, proud features, Theresa thought she recognized something of Richard's expression, passed her so closely that Theresa involuntarily recoiled. At the same time, she felt a deep pain. Sylvia firmly grasped her arm. The funeral procession passed.

She beheld familiar faces there: the bank manager, in whose house she had had her last position, and who stared at her without recognizing her in the half gloom of the church; and a young man who had once been her sweetheart.

As if weeping, she hid her face in her handkerchief. She stared at the coffin as it was borne out of the church door into the open, where a dark, blue, summer light welcomed it. That evening on the banks of the Danube returned to her mind; a few days more, and it would be just three years ago. Too good for him! She wondered. As if she were either too good or bad for any one! She heard, outside, the funeral carriage getting under way. The door closed slowly, and the incense enveloped her.

Sylvia was resting her head on the praying bar, sobbing under her breath. Theresa rose silently and left the place alone. A mild summer day received her. She had to hurry home quickly, for at five o'clock she was expecting pupils.

LXXVI

FOR A TIME, she devoted herself exclusively to her profession, in which she was steadily advancing, by dint of constant labour and through the utilizing of all her spare hours to perfect herself, to the position of a capable and sought-after teacher. She taught and prepared young girls exclusively for their examinations. Two youths who had applied she dismissed, since it was quite apparent that their aims were other than the passion of mastering English and French. A letter from Professor Wilnus, asking permission to visit her again, she had answered with a definite refusal. This she did not for an instant regret, although she occasionally felt that she had some reason to be grateful to him. Since his visit, a temporary change for the better was apparent in Franz's behaviour. He seemed to be attending school regularly, as a casual inquiry of Theresa's revealed. How and with whom he spent his many hours outside the house, she dared not attempt to discover.

She heard nothing from her brother, and was convinced that he resented her refusal of Professor Wilnus. Her mother, too, kept away from her. But for Sylvia's occasional visits at night, she would have been quite alone.

Richard was dropped from their conversation within a surprisingly short time. But they related all kinds of other occurrences of past days, Theresa resorting to hints, Sylvia sometimes expanding her narratives in more than lively descriptions. The men whom the two women had met in the course of their lives did not escape unscathed. Both warmed their hearts on the memories of by-gone days. Sylvia intended to return to her home in southern France as soon as possible. She had not visited it in almost twenty years. What she wished to do there, how she intended to maintain herself — naturally, she had been unable to save anything — she did not know. But her nostalgia for her home had almost assumed the character of a sickness. Tears streamed down the cheeks of this still gay creature whenever she spoke of the place of her birth. At such moments, Theresa noticed how withered and old Sylvia's features had become. It shocked her. But she consoled herself with the conviction that she herself was seven or eight years younger than her companion.

During this epoch of her life, the church again came to stand for an often visited and ever consoling haven. She prayed, or at least fervently wished, that she might continue to remain satisfied with her lot; that Franz might not cause her too much worry; and especially, that passion might never again disturb the quiet current of her life and torment her innermost being.

It happened that, during this summer, she was to prepare a ten-year-old pupil, the youngest girl child of a celebrated actor, for her entrance examinations. To this end, the parents invited Theresa to a summer cottage in the Salzkammergut. Her activities were practically limited to instructing the little girl for several hours each day, most of the time sitting in the garden. An older daughter, not yet eighteen years of age, was in love with a young man, who frequently called. A cousin courted the still attractive lady of the house; and the husband devoted his attention to a sixteen-year-old girl friend of the daughter, a spoiled creature whom he practically pursued.

For Theresa, it was strange to observe how father, mother, and daughter each followed his or her own bent, utterly indifferent to everything else, and mistaking for harmless whims the profound emotions that were causing the others such untold suffering. Her eyes sharpened by so much experience, Theresa viewed this play of passions without herself being touched. She was affected less than a spectator at a theatre, and felt particularly glad that she was done with all such matters of the heart, both outwardly and inwardly.

Indeed, everything seemed to be running smoothly with her. But ultimately, a victim had to fall. The daughter of the house attempted suicide. Now, it was as if they were all rudely shaken from a dangerous dream. Without any painful discussions, these relationships, interwoven as by the play of summer winds, dissolved into an airy nothingness. They left the cottage earlier than they had planned. The entire family went south, Theresa returning to Vienna long before she had anticipated.

She had entrusted her son to the care of a neighbour, the widow of a government employee — a somewhat stupid creature, who was herself the mother of an eight-year-old boy. Although this woman was careful not to speak unfavourably of Franz, she felt obliged to inform Theresa that occasionally he had not come home for several days at a stretch.

Theresa talked to him. He lied so stupidly that Theresa was unable to believe even the most likely things. Upon reproving him, he became more than usually aggressive. But what shocked Theresa most deeply was not his words so much as his gestures and glances. There were no traces of the countenance of a boy remaining; instead, a precocious, spoiled, evil youth insolently stared at her. When Theresa began to talk of school, Franz brazenly declared he could not think of continuing. He had other, more clever plans.

He then discussed his former teachers, in the ugliest terms. A particularly offensive word hurt Theresa so much that she could not restrain herself from slapping his face. His face grew distorted with rage. He lifted his arm to strike her. Theresa could not parry the blow. Franz's fist crashed against her lips, which immediately began to bleed. Paying no heed to her, he rushed out, banging the door after him.

Filled with cruel despair, Theresa remained behind. But she did not weep.

That evening, for the first time in a long while, she again wrote to Alfred. The answer arrived in two days. Alfred counselled sending the boy somewhere to the provinces, as an apprentice, or a clerk, or anything. Her obligations were more than fulfilled. He did not wish her to worry. The most important thing was that she might finally be liberated of her worries and fears. Fears? The word at first seemed strange. But immediately afterwards, she felt that it was the correct one. Alfred, in another paragraph, mentioned that he was now engaged to the daughter of a professor in the University of Tübingen. He would probably return to Vienna with his bride between Christmas and the New Year. But never would he forget what she, Theresa, had meant to him, and what he owed her. She could count on him under all circumstances. The taste of bitterness was in her mouth. But even now, she did not weep.

She had been invited to dinner the coming Sunday at her brother's. Since she need not fear meeting her rejected suitor, she accepted. Karl welcomed her with obvious friendliness. She soon realized that he now favoured her refusal of the professor, who had proven thoroughly unreliable, he having left the Nationalistic party, for opportunistic reasons, to join the Christian-Socialists. He was now a promising candidate for the Board of Aldermen.

Karl next spoke of their mother, who, he claimed, gave him cause for grave concern. What, he asked, does the old lady do with her money, and what does she intend to do with it in the future? It was obvious that she must by now have saved a quite tidy sum. The children, and himself in particular, as the father of a family, had undoubtedly the right to investigate this matter. He wondered if Theresa, who as a single daughter could most gracefully do so, would mind talking over this delicate matter with her mother, and point out that he, Karl, was prepared to take their mother into his home, where she could certainly live more economically than at a boarding house. Although Karl's method of discussing the subject was distinctly offensive to Theresa, she promised to talk to her mother. But she had no intentions of acting on her promise, at least for the time being.

One evening, she encountered Agnes in the middle of the city. Theresa did not at once recognize her. She looked vulgar, almost disreputable. It was unpleasant for Theresa to stop in the street to talk with her. Agnes

informed her that she had some time since given up housework, and had secured a position as a saleslady at a perfumery shop. Theresa inquired after the old people. Agnes replied that she but seldom visited Ensbach now. Her father, moreover, had died last summer. Then she asked to be remembered to Franz, and took her leave.

A few days later, uninvited, she called on Theresa. Franz, with whom Theresa had hardly spoken a word since he had lifted his hand against her, and who now only came to the house for meals, and then late, happened, surprisingly enough, to be home. He greeted Agnes, not without embarrassment. But this he quickly lost in the face of her unconstraint. Soon the pair were hardly paying any attention at all to Theresa, but were conversing in some sort of familiar street dialect, which she could barely follow. They exchanged memories of Ensbach, with secret hints which they felt fairly certain that Theresa would not understand.

Sometimes, however, Agnes, with her daring, crooked glance, grinned at Theresa. In her look, one could clearly read the taunting boast: Do you think he belongs to you? Well, he's mine!

Finally, and in a coarsely friendly fashion, she shook Theresa's hand and departed. Without saying a word to his mother, Franz rejoined her. How he looked in his cheap, not at all boyish suit, with the checkered trousers, the too short jacket, and his red, seamed handkerchief! How pale, how vile... and yet, his face was not bad looking. A boy? No! That he decidedly no longer was. He seemed to be sixteen or seventeen years old. A young man? That word hardly fitted him, either. Another term forced itself on her mind, but she resolutely banished it. Her breast shook heavily with repressed tears.

LXXVII



SEVERAL DAYS LATER, Franz became sick, and exhibited dangerous symptoms. The doctor diagnosed it as meningitis. On the occasion of his third visit, he seemed prepared to abandon all hope. Theresa wrote an imploring letter to her brother. The latter came, thoughtfully shook his head, and prescribed internal and external remedies which, after a few hours, actually seemed to break the power of the malady. He came again on the following day.

Franz was soon out of danger. And now, for Theresa, it was a surprising and marvelous experience to observe how Franz seemed to alter during his convalescence. When she sat by his bedside, he liked to hold her hand. Then she felt the pressure of his fingers, like a prayer for forgiveness, like a promise. She would occasionally read to him. With grateful, even child-like attention, he would listen. To her, it seemed as if he were manifesting distinct signs of interest in certain subjects, particularly stories of animals, travel, and discoveries. She resolved to talk seriously to him about his future, at the first opportunity. She even dreamed of having him continue his studies, so that he might become a teacher or a doctor. Still, she dared not yet talk to him of such plans. But the deception could not long continue. She soon knew that she had merely been fancying a change in her boy. The more definitely Franz's recovery was marked, the more quickly he reverted to his former state. The childish and grateful look in his eyes disappeared. His speech regained that intonation, that timbre that she remembered all too well from the days preceding his illness. At first, he still kept himself in control. He still answered his mother. But his answers became ever more impatient, rude, and coarse. The instant he was permitted to leave his bed, he could not be kept at home. And a night came — it was not to be the last — when Franz failed to come home till morning.

She no longer asked questions but let things slide. She was weary. There were hours when, feeling no pain, she felt that her life was ended though she was hardly thirty-three years old. But upon gazing into the mirror, particularly in the early hours of morning after rising, she felt that she looked older by years.

As long as her overpowering fatigue endured, she quietly accepted her fate. But when spring returned, and she felt her strength once more renewed, she fought against she knew not what. Her lessons began to be painfully tiresome. She showed impatience, even rudeness, toward her pupils; a thing which had never before happened. She felt lonely. But it was worse when Franz was at home. In this, she immediately felt that she wronged him. How she would have loved to pour her heart out to Sylvia! But that friend, having changed her position, was with a family in the country, and therefore could not be reached. For this reason, and to free herself of the occasionally quite unbearable feeling of desolation and desertion, she more frequently visited the home of her brother. She observed that he received her visits not without surprise, and certainly without enthusiasm.

Her sister-in-law, on her part, was doubly amiable at that time when she was awaiting her second child. Theresa, once or twice, opened her heart to her, confessing a number of things which she had formerly kept hidden. It touched her to find understanding and compassion where she had least expected it. It was as if the period of pregnancy had not only softened the woman, but had seemingly made her more intelligent than she really was.

As soon as the child was born, the woman relapsed into her former indifference and narrowness, apparently remembering not a single fragment of the various secrets entrusted to her by Theresa. Theresa was glad that it should be thus.

LXXVIII

AT THE BEGINNING of the winter, Theresa chanced to meet Alfred in the city. She had not received an answer to her last letter which he claimed never to have received. At first somewhat cool and embarrassed toward her, he soon was as cordial as ever. The manner in which he spoke of his young bride did not permit the supposition of a particularly passionate affection on his part. Theresa immediately imagined her as a poor, pale, German provincial creature, at whose side he would certainly be assailed by renewed desire for her, Theresa. She liked him more than ever. Even his appearance had improved, and he seemed better groomed than ever before. They made no appointment when they parted; but now he was again in the city, and it was possible for her to see him whenever she so desired. She dreamed of a new affection on his part, and was happy in the thought. She began to look fresher and younger again.

A young man, almost a boy, who occasionally called for his sister after her lessons with Theresa, fell in love with her, although she had not paid any special attention to him. Once he came early in the morning, to bring her a message from his sister. His embarrassment amused her, and she herself ventured some advances. He remained as embarrassed as ever, probably not even understanding her smile and her glances — and when he had left again, she was ashamed of herself, and resolved to be cold to him from then on.

One day, Theresa was again requested to visit the school. She was not particularly surprised to learn that, for many weeks, Franz had not attended his classes. When she talked to him about it, at home, he told her of his resolution to become a sailor. Theresa remembered that he had expressed similar desires before, and had referred casually to the subject during his talk with Agnes. Now, however, it seemed to be his earnest ambition. Theresa had nothing to say against it; they talked the plan over quite thoroughly and, after a time, they were conversing with each other decently and in an almost friendly manner, and not like enemies forced to live together under the same roof. But during the next few days, the plan was not mentioned again. Theresa did not dare to bring it up, as if she feared to be blamed some day for having driven her son out into the world.

A sallow, lanky youth, who claimed to be a clerk in a grocery store, had called at her house a few times, and frequently took Franz to the theatre, for which, as he said, he always received free tickets. After the theatre, Franz usually stayed the night with his friend; that, at least, was what he told his mother. Once it happened that he did not appear during the entire day following. In a sudden access of fear, which she thought she had long since stifled, Theresa sought out the parents of the friend, and learned that he, too, had not been home. That evening, Theresa was summoned by the police. It developed that Franz, together with a few other half-grown boys and girls, had been arrested as a member of a band of youthful thieves.

Franz, as the only one who had not reached his sixteenth year, was delivered over to his mother for punishment. The police commissioner had him brought into the room, talked to him seriously and, in a cold monologue that sounded as if he had learned it by heart, expressed the hope that this might be a lesson for Franz, and that he would hereafter conduct himself as a decent member of society.

Theresa walked home with her son in silence. Finally, she resolved to question him. At first, he answered in a peculiar, constrained manner, his words sounding like a defense prepared for the courtroom. To listen to him, one would imagine the whole thing to have been merely a joke. In fact, nothing had been stolen at all. When Theresa tried to appeal to his conscience, he did not seem to be as stubborn as before; in fact, it seemed as if the confession forced out of him in the presence of his mother had made it easier for him to talk —

something which he had not heretofore found the courage to do.

He spoke of the boy and girl friends with whom he used to foregather every night; and, for a while, it actually seemed as if he were talking only of youthful mischief. He mentioned names which could not possibly be genuine; they were, as he confessed, surnames of a peculiar nature, and full of double meaning. Gradually, he seemed to forget that it was his mother whom he was addressing. He told of nights spent in the Prater during the past summer, when they all, boys and girls alike, had slept in the open. Only when he caught a terrified look in her eyes, did he laugh impudently and become silent. And she knew that this sudden burst of confidence had more definitely and hopelessly alienated her from her son than anything that had passed between them before.

LXXIX

THENCEFORTH, SHE ASKED nothing. Without remonstrance, she let him leave the house nightly, knowing that he would not return until the next morning. Once, however, when morning came and he had not returned, an anxious, inexplicable presentiment overcame her. She did not doubt that once more he had been caught in some vileness, and that, this time, it would not end so happily for him. And when he finally stood before her, her excitement, probably ascribable to the fact that her fears had proved without foundation, expressed itself in particularly harsh words.

He let her talk on, hardly replying. He even laughed at her, as if he enjoyed her wrath. Still more excited by this attitude of indifference, she talked herself into a state bordering on hysteria. Then, quite suddenly, he flung at her a word which at first she could not believe that she had heard correctly. With wide, almost crazed eyes, she stared at him. But he repeated the insult, and continued:

"And one like you would tell me what to do! What the hell do you think you are?"

His tongue was now unleashed. He kept on talking, heaping curses, sneers, and threats upon his mother. She listened helplessly, rooted to the spot. It was the first time that he had thrown the blame of his birth at her. But he did not talk to her as to an unfortunate girl, deserted by her sweetheart. No; he talked as if she were a hussy, who had had bad luck and did not even know who was the father of her child. Nor were these the accusations uttered by a child who feels himself handicapped, endangered, and disgraced through being born in bastardy. These were the common, foul curses which gamins shout after harlots.

Theresa consoled herself with the thought that, in spite of his baseness, he hardly understood what he was saying. He was simply expressing himself in the manner of the circle in which he moved. She neither took offence nor felt hurt. It was simply the horror of a tremendous loneliness, such as she had never felt before. And from an immense distance came to her the voice of an inexplicably strange person — a human being to whom she had herself given birth.

That same night, she wrote a special delivery letter to Alfred, telling him that she must see him. Several days passed before he asked her to call on him. He proved amiable, but a little distant. His searching glance made her feel as if he wanted to ascertain first that nothing in her appearance was amiss. While she talked of the reason for her visit, speaking in a somewhat forced, hardly coherent way of the last experiences she had had with Franz, she tried vainly to catch a glimpse of her own reflection in the mirror on the opposite wall. When she had finished, Alfred remained silent for a moment before stating his opinion. Then he made some sort of speech on the case, from which Theresa learned hardly anything that she had not known before. Nor was this the first time that she heard the words "moral insanity" issuing from his lips. And he finished his remarks by stating anew his conviction that he could not give her better advice than he had done some time before — to give the boy away; if possible, to send him to another city, before something that could not be otherwise averted should happen.

Theresa, rocking forward and backward in her chair, had finally caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror, and was shocked. To be sure, the lighting of the room was not of the best; but that the mirror could transmute the beautiful into the ugly and the young into the old, could not possibly be credited. And she saw, she seemed to discover irrevocably in this strange, unfamiliar mirror, that at her thirty-four years, she was becoming withered, elderly, and sallow, like a woman of more than forty. Well, she had lost weight, especially in the last few weeks; besides, she was not dressed to advantage, and her hat particularly did not

suit her face. But even taking these things into consideration, the face staring out at her from the mirror brought her a painful surprise. When Alfred stopped talking, she was aware that she had hardly listened to him. Now he stepped up in front of her. Feeling obliged to add a few softening words, he remarked that it was possible that, to a certain extent, the age of puberty might be responsible for Franz's ugly attitude. Before everything else, he warned Theresa against those self-accusations in which, as he thought, she was likely to indulge in her predicament, and for which no foundation whatever existed.

She protested vehemently. What, had she no reasons for self-accusations? Who, if not she? She had never been a real mother to Franz! For a few days, or a few weeks at a time — only occasionally, so to speak — she had behaved like a mother toward him. Most of the time, she had been exclusively occupied with her own affairs, with her profession, with her own problems, and — yes, why should she deny it? — with her love affairs. And how often had she thought of the boy as a burden; yes, just that: as a misfortune — even a long time ago, before she had ever thought of any such thing as moral insanity, or found the slightest traces of it. Even at the time when he was a tiny, innocent baby, even before he had been born, she had not wanted to have anything to do with him. And on the night of his birth, she had hoped and prayed that he might not live!

She had wanted to say still other, truer things; but at the last moment she held them back, in the fear that still more detailed confession might definitely lose this friend to her, and that she might put herself too completely into his power. So she was silent. Even if he did put his hand affectionately and kindly on her shoulder, she could not help seeing that, with the other hand, Alfred took his watch from his pocket; and when Theresa thereupon rose with a certain haste, he remarked, in excuse, that he had to be at the hospital before six. But he did not want Theresa to do anything before she had talked to him again. And — probably it had had not been his intention to go quite so far, at first — he proposed that she should bring Franz with her the next time she came; or, better still, that he himself should call on her some day, perhaps on Sunday, at noon. He would talk to Franz once more, and endeavour to get a clear, personal impression of the boy's character.

Theresa herself did not understand why this very natural offer of her onetime lover, her friend and physician, should now impress her as if a way to salvation had suddenly opened. Out of a full heart she thanked him.

LXXX

THE PROPOSED VISIT of Alfred was not destined to take place, for the next morning Franz had disappeared from the house of his mother, without leaving a word of explanation. Theresa's first impulse was to notify the police; but she finally decided not to do so, lest the officials should regard his disappearance as flight, and be set in pursuit of him through her. She telephoned Alfred, who at first seemed displeased at being called during his working hours. He assured her that he could see nothing wrong in this new turn of events. It might be most wise for her to take no new steps, but instead, to let the affair run its course.

His indifference pained Theresa. She could not but realize that it hurt her more than Franz's disappearance. Soon, though, on her son's account alone she was experiencing interminable hours of pain and despair. Through a sleepless night, she felt an unbearable longing for her missing boy. She even thought of inserting an advertisement in the papers, such as she often read: "Return, and all will be forgiven!"

But by morning, she realized the stupidity of her plan. She did nothing and, after several weeks had passed, she was obliged to admit that her life, if it was not actually happier, was at least quieter than when her son had occupied her home.

She told the neighbours that Franz had found a position in a small town in the Austrian provinces. It mattered not whether they believed or disbelieved her. Nobody was particularly concerned with the family life of Fraulein Fabiani.

Her professional duties, which she had long followed mechanically and listlessly, once more began to afford her a certain satisfaction. Not only did she give individual instruction, but she also succeeded in grouping in classes a number of young girls of the same age.

Beyond this, she once more relapsed into the lethargy of a lonely life. Neither mother, nor brother, nor sister-in-law showed any interest in her. Nor did she hear from Alfred. She left the house as little as possible, and arranged matters so that she need but rarely teach beyond the confines of her own four walls.

Rarely did she manifest any interest whatever in her pupils, beyond the limits of her lessons. Sometimes, bitterly and ruefully, she thought of the days when, as a governess, she had given her heart to and felt a motherly interest in pupils to whom, certainly, she had then been nearer through the very fact of sharing their domiciles.

But once, several months after Franz had run away from home, it chanced that one of the girls attending her classes remained away a number of days. This absence of the sixteen-year-old girl stirred her more deeply than anything of the kind had ever done before. When a letter from the girl's father explained the absence of his daughter as being due to a sore throat and fever, Theresa developed a restlessness which she herself hardly understood. Thilda appeared again after a week's absence. Theresa felt her face redden with joy, and knew that her eyes were shining. This she would hardly have realized herself, but for the fact that, like an answer, a smile, strange, indulgent, and yet superior, played round the girl's mouth. Then Theresa knew that she loved this child, and that her love presaged unhappiness. She also knew that this sixteen-year-old girl belonged to a species of mortals different from herself; that she belonged among the cold, the resourceful, the self-satisfied: among those who never suffer from anything really difficult or important, understanding as they do how to preserve themselves and, from every one coming within their sphere, taking what they can — precisely as much or as little as they need or as may seem agreeable to their caprice.

Now, when Thilda entered the room, after a week's absence, several minutes late as usual, with a graceful

gesture; when she instantly moved her chair to the table to join the five other members of the class, a barely perceptible, well-bred movement of her hand prevented Theresa from interrupting the class one instant for her sake. And that moment was one of those when a ray of light suddenly pierced the slumbering soul of the teacher, revealing the sentimental relationship between herself and this pupil, once and for all time, definitely and vividly.

The lesson over, it seemed most natural that Thilda should remain alone with her teacher. A conversation followed, beginning with the girl's illness. Thilda confessed that it had first appeared dangerous. Her parents had even engaged a nurse.

"What, a nurse?"

"Why, yes! Mother, you know, does not live in Vienna."

Did Fraulein Fabiani not know that? Her parents were divorced. The mother had been sojourning in Italy these many years, the climate of Vienna not being propitious for her. Thilda had spent all the preceding summer, until late in the autumn, with her mother at one of the Italian bathing resorts on the Mediterranean. She did not divulge the name, for she loved to be casual. And Theresa felt it would be tactless, that it would sound too inquisitive, to ask the name of the resort. The nurse had proved to be a pleasant enough person. They were able to dismiss her, fortunately, on the fourth day. It had seemed a relief to be alone and undisturbed in her bed, at last able to read an interesting book. Though Theresa was tempted to ask what the book was, she dared not.

"So you live alone with your daddy?" she inquired.

Thilda smiled. Her answer spoke of a father, not a daddy. While talking of him, she grew a little more warm than was customary with her. It was quite simple living with him. After the mother had "departed," Thilda had a governess for a while. It had soon become evident that she could manage as well, in fact better, without one. She had attended a girl's school until last year. Now she studied at home, taking piano lessons, even harmony, — and here a shadow of envy passed across Theresa's features — and twice weekly, she attended lectures on the history of art, in the company of several friends. Almost instantly, she corrected herself: a few acquaintances, for she had no friends. She made short trips each Sunday with her father, who also took her to concerts, for her sake alone, since he himself cared but little for music.

Then she bent her head forward. Theresa did not at once understand that this signified good-bye. A slight handshake followed, and Thilda had left.

Theresa, strangely numb, remained where she sat. Something new had entered her life. She felt both older and younger — older in a motherly way; younger as a sister.

She was careful not to let the other girls, or Thilda herself, for that matter, perceive how peculiarly she felt toward the latter. She sensed Thilda's gratitude for this. Her reward soon came. One day after class was over, Thilda invited her, in behalf of her father, to dine with them the coming Sunday. Theresa blushed with joy; but Thilda was kind enough not to notice it. She spent a little time arranging her books; then, taking her coat, talked of a Bulwer novel recommended to her by Theresa, and which had somewhat disappointed her. Finally, with a happy face, she again turned to Theresa:

"Tomorrow, then, at one!"

And she was gone.

LXXXI

THE OLD, WELL-PRESERVED, and from all appearances but recently renovated house in one of the side streets of the Mariahilf suburbs had belonged to the Wohlschein family for nearly a century. In the rear stood a small manufacturing plant where leather-goods were made. The ground floor was occupied by a store. A larger, more fashionable store had been established elsewhere in the city, but the old customers preferred to make their purchases here. The living quarters were one flight up. The drawing room into which Theresa was ushered was comfortable, though somewhat old-fashioned, with heavy, dark green plush curtains and over stuffed furniture in the same colour. The dining room, the door to which stood ajar, was bright and modern.

Thilda came running up gaily to greet her guest.

"Father is home, too," she said. "We can begin to eat immediately."

She was wearing a blue dress, with a white silk collar. Her brown hair hung free down her back. Theresa had only seen her before with her hair braided. She looked younger and more childish now.

It was a dull, wintry day. The massive bronze lamp standing on the table was already lit. "Where do you think father and I spent the day?" Thilda asked. "In the Dombach Park and on the Hameau! We started at half past eight."

"Wasn't it rather foggy?"

"Not so terribly! Toward noon, the weather cleared up beautifully. We enjoyed a good view of the Danube."

Herr Sigmund Wohlschein entered from the adjoining room. He was somewhat heavy. Despite the bald spot on his head and his grayish hair, he was still youthful in appearance. He had a roundish face, a dark, heavy moustache, and light-coloured, medium-sized, friendly eyes.

"I am glad to have you here, Fraulein Fabiani. Thilda has told me a great deal about you. Forgive me, please, for presenting myself in sports clothes."

He spoke in a remarkably deep voice, using a dialect faintly Viennese. He wore quite handsome sports clothes, with dark stockings and patent leather house shoes.

An elderly servant served the soup, while Herr Wohlschein himself filled the dishes at every course. It proved to be a homely, well-prepared Sunday dinner, accompanied with a light Bordeaux wine. The talk led from the Wienerwald, lauded by Herr Wohlschein for its autumnal charms, to other hilly, mountainous sections through which, as an enthusiastic climber, he had wandered. In answer to friendly questions, Theresa described her childhood, Salzburg, her dead father the colonel, and her mother the writer whose name seemed to be entirely unknown in this household. She also casually mentioned her brother, though she did not tell them that he carried another name. Her son, naturally, she did not discuss, though she took it for granted that he was known to Thilda, as he was to her other pupils, who might have observed him while he was living at home. Never before had his existence, his relationship to her, seemed so ambiguous and remote as now. Herr Wohlschein retired shortly after the meal. Thilda led Theresa into her own airy room, which contained a small, well-chosen library. Together, they pored over the illustrations of an historical work. While she looked at a view of the Barberini palace, Thilda asked Theresa if she knew the original of the print, which was hanging in the Art Museum? Theresa was obliged to admit that, since an early visit there with one of her pupils, she had never revisited the place.

"We must make up for that," Thilda said.

A little later, Herr Wohlschein, now in street clothes, wearing a rather too high collar and a fur coat, again appeared, kissed his daughter on the forehead, and said he was going to his game of tarock at a nearby café, and would return for supper at eight o'clock.

"You may stay longer," she replied, glancing at him with an understanding smile. "I have letters to write."

Letters, Theresa thought — probably to her mother, who is abroad. Herr Wohlschein certainly thought so, too, for he remained silent a moment. His kindly brow wrinkled.

Then he took an amiable leave of Theresa, but without expressing any desire to see her again. Theresa shortly thereafter thought that it was time for her, too, to go. Thilda did not detain her.

Thus was her introduction to this house effected. At intervals of two or three weeks came further invitations for Sunday meals, at which other guests occasionally participated. There was the widowed sister of the head of the house, who, despite her gay temperament, loved sadly to shake her head and discuss the serious maladies of her acquaintances; the reserved and uncommunicative manager of the Wohlschein firm; an older girl friend of Thilda's, an art student, who talked, amusingly and sarcastically enough, of the professors and girl students at her school. They all made but vague impressions on Theresa, who forgot practically all of them before she had left the house. It seemed that, as compared with Thilda, although she hardly participated in the conversation, the others had no light of their own.

Theresa could not help feeling the girl's sustained intelligence, her superior qualities, and, at the same time, her aloofness.

This aloofness persisted. Always, not only during the classes, but afterwards during their talks, in Thilda's own room as at the Museum, which she visited with Thilda for the first time one Christmas day, Theresa was conscious of this sometimes embarrassing detachment. She occasionally felt jealous of the blond wife of Palma Vecchio, of Rubens' Maximilian, since Thilda seemed, in their presence, to be more free and intimate and tender than when she was with Theresa, perhaps with any living human being.

LXXXII

ONE NIGHT, WHILE she was preparing for bed, the door bell rang. Franz was standing outside, covered with snow, without a winter overcoat, but wearing what appeared to be a somewhat gaudy new suit of clothes. His red, seamed handkerchief protruded as before from his breast pocket. This was a person entirely different from the one he had been half a year ago. No longer could he be justly called a boy; he was rather a young man, although not one of the best quality. His face was pale; his greased hair was parted in the middle; there was the promise of a moustache under his pug nose. His shifting, piercing eyes gave him a suspicious air.

"Good evening, Mother," he said, with a stupid, insolent laugh.

She gazed at him steadily, unshocked. He beat the snow from off his clothes and shoes. With a somewhat gawky politeness, as if entering a strange house, he followed his mother. The remains of the supper were still on the table. His hungry glance rested on the plates of butter and cheese. Theresa cut him a slice of bread and pointed to the food.

"Please!" she said. "Yes, the cold weather makes one hungry!" he said, spreading butter on his bread and eating.

"So, you are back again?" Theresa said, after a short silence.

She felt that she had turned pale.

"Not for ever!"

Franz, his mouth full, replied quickly, as if to reassure her.

"You know, Mother, I got sick on the way."

"On the way to America!"

Theresa, completely apathetic, finished the sentence for him.

Franz continued, paying no heed to her:

"After all, it was only a hurt foot. But the money didn't last, either. The friend who was with me left me in the lurch. Then somebody told me that you need papers of some sort for the ship. I'll be sure to get them, somehow. But for the time being, I thought it best to come home."

"How long are you back?" she asked, slowly.

"Not for such a long time, you may be sure!" he replied evasively, with a defiant laugh.

He told her he had worked as an extra waiter at a restaurant on Sundays and holidays. He claimed that he had a chance to find steady work there. He would have secured it long before, he said, but for the fact that he needed all manner of small things. Shirts, for example. His shoes were in bad shape, too. He showed his mother the pair he was wearing — thin, patent leather shoes, practically without soles.

Theresa nodded her head. She would not let herself be conscious of whether the emotion she felt was pity, or fear lest her boy should become a drag on her again.

"Where do you live?" she asked.

"Oh, there's no need for you to worry on that score. Thank heaven, I'm not without a roof over my head! I've got friends enough for that."

"Why don't you stay here, Franz?" she asked.

Hardly had she uttered the words, when she regretted them. He shook his head.

"I don't belong here," he said, dryly. "But if you will let me sleep here tonight, I won't refuse. It's a long way. And in this weather, with these shoes..."

Theresa rose, but again hesitated. She had intended taking one of the few banknotes she possessed from the linen chest where she kept them concealed. She realized that this would be worse than careless. Instead, she said:

"I'll make you a bed on the couch. Perhaps I can raise a few gulden for you, so you can buy a new pair of shoes."

Franz wrinkled his forehead, without as much as saying "Thank you!"

"You'll get it back, Mother, I promise, not later than three weeks from now."

"I don't want it back," she said.

Franz lit a cigarette and stared into space.

"You haven't got a bottle of beer, Mother, have you?"

She shook her head.

"Well, then, perhaps a glass of rum?"

"I'll make you some tea."

"No, thanks, no tea. Only rum makes a fellow warm. I know where you keep it."

He rose and went to the kitchen.

Theresa spread the sheet on the couch. She heard Franz fumbling about outside. My son? she asked herself, shuddering. While Franz was still outside, she took a five-gulden bill from the chest. While she was locking it, Franz tiptoed in again, the rum bottle in his hand. He acted as if he had noticed nothing.

She kept the bill in the palm of her hand, holding it so until the bed was made. He poured the rum into a water tumbler, filling the glass almost to the brim, and raised it to his lips.

"Franz!" Theresa cried.

He drank it, shrugging his shoulders.

"When a man's cold!" he said.

He threw off his coat, vest, and collar. He wore only a torn undervest, and was without a shirt. Then he stretched himself on the couch and covered himself with the blanket.

"Good-night, Mother," he said.

She stood motionless and silent, while he turned his face to the wall and instantly fell asleep. She took a second five-gulden bill from the chest and placed it with the first one on the table. Then she sat down for a while, refleeting, her head on her hands. Finally, she put out the light and went into her bedroom. She did not completely undress, but lay down, trying without success to fall asleep.

Shortly after midnight, she again rose and tiptoed into the room. Franz was breathing quietly. She thought of the way she had formerly watched over him in his sleep, when he was still a child. Tonight, too, he was lying in the same way, the covers piled up to his chin. As the room was dark, she saw not his face as it looked now, but another face of past years. Yes, he too had once had a child's face; he too had once been a child. Today, even — oh, this much was certain — his face would be different today, had she not murdered him once.

Involuntarily, as from profound depths, this word had entered her consciousness. Yet, it was something else that she had meant.

"Had I only been able to devote more attention to him" — that was what she had wished to think— "he might be different now. Had I been a different mother, my son would have become a different man!"

She trembled. Carefully, almost without touching him, she stroked his smooth, oiled hair.

Under her breath, she said:

"I will keep him with me. Tomorrow morning, I shall talk to him again."

She returned to her bed. This time, she fell asleep. Awakening at seven the next morning, she entered the adjacent room. The blanket lay crumpled on the floor. The bottle was three-fourths empty. Franz had vanished.

LXXXIII

SHE TOLD NOBODY of this visit. Sooner than she had thought possible, it became a dim memory. Even the fact that, a week later, an elderly, plain-featured woman, with a kerchief round her head, brought a letter from Franz which read: "Help me again, Mother, I need twenty gulden urgently!" hardly touched her. Without an accompanying line, she sent him half the sum which he requested. Even that entailed no small sacrifice.

Shortly afterwards, and most unexpectedly, her sister-in-law paid her a visit. She seemed friendly, though embarrassed. She would have come long before, she explained, but for the difficulty of leaving her household and her two children. And the reason she came today... Here she hesitated, and handed Theresa a letter, several lines in length, from Franz, written in a childish, clumsy scrawl and badly spelled:

My dear Mrs. Faber, Permit me, in my temporary embarrassment, to address you. Would you be kind enough to help me, because just now my mother can't, and get me a pair of shoes? Also, lend me eleven gulden."

Very respectfully,

Franz Fabiani.

"I hope you sent him nothing, "Theresa said.

"Even had I wished to, I could not. I must account for every penny. I only wanted to ask you to tell him, for God's sake, never to write me another such letter. If my husband intercepted one like this! It's for your sake, too, Theresa!"

Theresa frowned.

"Franz has not lived with me for a long time. I know nothing about him. What I could do, I have done. Only a few days ago, I sent him some more money. What can I do? You don't suppose I prompted him to write that? I don't even know where he lives!"

She suddenly burst into tears. Her sister-in-law sighed.

"Every one must bear his cross!"

Now, as if she had been waiting for her chance to unburden her heart, she talked on. Not everything was smooth running with her, either. But for the children — a third one was now expected! Another worry, but perhaps better luck. She needed it!

"You can imagine that it's not so easy, living with Karl. He thinks only of his societies and his meetings. He hardly spends an evening home. Naturally, his professional work suffers too."

She bitterly complained of his surliness, his harshness, and his fits of temper. There were still tears in her eyes when she left, her departure precipitated by the arrival of two pupils. One of these was Thilda.

Her glance rested questioningly and not without compassion on Theresa, who felt obliged to offer an explanation.

"That was my brother's wife," she remarked.

"My brother's wife," Thilda repeated, transposing the German into English. She unpacked her notebooks. Her interest in Theresa's family affairs was exhausted.

LXXXIV



DURING THE FOLLOWING week, they planned no walks or visits to the galleries in each other's company. Nor did Thilda remain with her teacher after the lessons as was her custom. But one day, and most unexpectedly — it was almost spring — she again invited Theresa for Sunday dinner.

Theresa breathed more freely. She feared that she might have fallen into disfavour with the Wohlscheins, for she knew not what reason. Moreover, only yesterday, she had been agitated by a renewed demand from her son for money, the demand transmitted again by that ugly old woman. She had sent him five gulden, and had availed herself of the opportunity to warn him never again to approach her brother's wife.

"Why don't you find a position, somewhere outside of Vienna," she wrote, "if you can't find one here? I am not in a position to help you any more."

Hardly had she dispatched the letter than she regretted it, feeling that it might be dangerous to excite Franz. Now, with Thilda again kind to her, she felt stronger, as if steeled against further impending mishaps.

Thilda was alone when Theresa arrived. She greeted her teacher with special warmth, and expressed her joy to find her looking so much better than usual. As if answering Theresa's questioning look, she spoke, almost in an aside, and with a knowing air:

"It's always so! No good ever comes of family visits, particularly when they are unexpected."

"Well," Theresa replied, "I fortunately receive them but rarely, whether expected or unexpected."

She spoke of her retired, almost reclusive mode of life. Now that her son had finally found a position "abroad" — she blushed, and Thilda busied herself with the books on the racks — she hardly saw any of the members of her family. Her mother was completely immersed in her scribbling; her brother had his professional duties, and was moreover interested in politics; and her sister-in-law was completely absorbed by her home and children.

Thilda quite unexpectedly remarked:

"Do you know, Fraulein Fabiani, what Father said, the other day? But you won't feel offended?"

"Offended!" Theresa repeated, in surprise.

Thilda added quickly:

"Father thinks — how shall I phrase it? — that you don't quite know how to make the most of your opportunities." At Theresa's blank stare, she explained.

"He thinks that such an excellent teacher should be entitled, in fact obliged, to demand higher fees."

"I'm afraid, Thilda," Theresa protested, "that even what I get is too much. I am only a private teacher. I have never passed a single examination, and never held a public position."

She told how she had early been forced to earn her own living, and had never had a chance to make up her deficiencies — all that she had missed, perhaps through the fault of no one but herself. But, as always happened, it was now too late appreciably to better her condition.

"Heavens, it is never too late!" Thilda replied.

Again, she most unexpectedly asked Theresa if she might take the liberty of asking her a favour. She was not quite sure when Theresa's name-day occurred.

"I have none, you know," she explained.

That was why she now begged her to accept a belated present. Before Theresa could answer, Thilda had disappeared into the adjoining room. Returning with an English tailor-made coat, she asked Fraulein Fabiani

to rise and helped her into it. The coat fitted as if it had been made to her order. If any alterations were needed, Thilda explained, the tailor would make them at any time.

"Why, you look extremely trim!" Theresa told herself, as she stood before the huge mirror in Thilda's room. It was indeed a tasteful, correctly fitted coat. It made her appear as a fairly youngish young lady of good family.

"Oh, yes, before I forget!" Thilda proceeded, handing Theresa a small package, wrapped in thin paper. "This goes with it."

It contained three pairs of white, dark-grey, and brown gloves, of the best quality suede.

"Six and three-quarters — isn't that the size?"

While Theresa was trying on one of the gloves, Herr Wohlschein entered.

"Congratulations, Fraulein Fabiani!" he said.

"Why, Herr Wohlschein?"

"This is your birthday, Thilda tells me."

"Why, no! It is neither my birthday nor my name-day! I really don't know!..."

"Well, we are celebrating it today!" Thilda declared. "And that is that!"

The dinner progressed, with every one in the best of spirits. They drank white Burgundy. Theresa was toasted. She began to be persuaded that it was really her birthday. A sister of Herr Wohlschein joined them for coffee. Later, a business friend came, a Herr Verkade, of Holland — a man past the flush of youth, smoothly shaven, with dark hair, gray temples, and light blue eyes beneath black eyebrows.

They discussed Java, where Herr Verkade had lived for many years, sea journeys, luxurious steamers, balls at sea, improvements in trade and commerce throughout the world, and the deficiencies of Austria.

Herr Wohlschein's sister defended her country. Herr Verkade did not care to presume with a judgment of local conditions, and so adroitly diverted the talk into other channels, speaking of operas, famous singers, concerts, and the like. In the course of his conversation, he several times addressed Theresa with particular politeness.

She had often participated in such conversations, but never before on equal terms. Today, she several times found herself eager to speak, but afraid to venture an opinion. At a convenient opportunity — nobody but Theresa noticed the strategy of the manœuvre — Thilda made her talk. Gradually — the wine may have been in part responsible — Theresa's embarrassment disappeared. She spoke with a freedom and vivacity that had almost become foreign to her nature. She occasionally noticed the somewhat surprised, but certainly not displeased glance of the master of the house.

LXXXV

THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY finally brought about what had frequently been planned, but never carried out — a long walk with Thilda, her father, and a young married couple, whom they had encountered in the street car.

It proved to be a beautiful spring day. They lunched at an inn in the forest. Theresa knew it as the very one where she had, many years ago, spent several hours in Kasimir's company. Was she not sitting at the identical table, on the very chair, perhaps? Were not these perhaps the same children scampering about the tiny plot of grass yonder, just as that was the self-same sky above her, the same landscape, the same confused hum of voices? Were not the people at the adjoining table the very people with whom her companion, much to her displeasure, had begun a conversation?

Only a second later did she realize that the man with whom her thoughts were preoccupied was the father of her child. Something else occurred to her which, strangely enough, she had not thought of until this moment — that only last night, Franz had reminded her of his existence, in a most disagreeable fashion. He had sent her a letter requesting two hundred gulden. He was in trouble. This would save him. Moreover, with that sum, he could begin anew.

"Mother, don't fail me, I beseech you," he had written. It was not the old woman with the kerchief who had brought the letter, but instead, a lanky, dilapidated youth, who had roughly pushed open the door, closed it behind him, and silently handed her the letter, with an impudent expression on his face. It was as if it were Franz's intention to frighten his mother by his messenger's appearance. She had sent him thirty gulden, which had been difficult enough for her. How was this affair to end? Oh, if he had only gone to America; if only she had money enough to pay for his passage! But what guarantee had she that he would actually board the vessel and depart?

Suddenly, as if in a picture, she beheld him aboard a freighter, in a frayed suit, with torn shoes, no overcoat, and with the collar of his coat turned up about his neck, freezing in rain and storm. And simultaneously there returned that sense of guilt which again and again came back to her, though but for a few fleeting moments only, and which, disappearing, left her suspended in space — floating, as it were, as if everything which she experienced were unreal and dream-like.

"Your soup will be cold," Thilda said.

Theresa glanced up, and recovered her self-possession. The others had not noticed her absent-mindedness. They ate, talked and laughed. Even Theresa breathed, freely again. She relished the soup and enjoyed the air, the landscape, the people, the season, and the Sunday spirit which surrounded her.

The married couple, wishing to climb a nearby hill, took leave. The others started homeward. In a beautiful open spot in the forest, overlooking the wide expanse of the Danube, they rested. Herr Wohlschein fell asleep. Theresa sat at some little distance and began to talk at length. She recollected much of by-gone days; people she had not thought of for a long time; others whom she had completely forgotten; families with whom she had lived; fathers and mothers; children she had educated, or at least tutored. It was as if she had opened an album of photographs, passing over some, superficially regarding others, and pondering on still others with deep emotion.

It was sad, yet consoling, to think that of all the children to whom she had been practically a mother, there was hardly one who would still remember her; certainly, there were none who knew anything of her present existence.

Attentively, her hands linked round her knees, occasionally with a child's wondering eyes, or deeply touched, Thilda listened; and as she listened, those pictures of the past assumed a more definite reality to Theresa than they had had at the time of their occurrence. She was grateful to Thilda because, through her, her poor life had become rich for the space of one brief spring hour.

Herr Wohlschein awoke, looked up, rose, and asked if they had discussed many interesting things. Theresa and Thilda also rose, and shook the grass and dust from their clothes. The three made their way down the hill. Thilda linked her arm confidentially into Theresa's. Occasionally they ran ahead, while Herr Wohlschein, his coat slung over his arm, followed. It was the same path that Theresa had taken, so many years ago, with Kasimir Tobisch... in those far-off days, when she had carried his child within her.

Long before dusk, Herr Wohlschein and Thilda took leave of Theresa at her door. She felt doubly lonely, that evening, in her house into which the warmth of the burgeoning spring had not yet found its way.

Soon her life, which had been rich for a moment, was as barren as before.

LXXXVI

A WEEK OR more passed, during which Thilda's behaviour was hardly more intimate than that of any of Theresa's other pupils. The girl seemed, in fact, anxious to leave the instant the classes were dismissed. Then, quite unexpectedly again, she brought an invitation, in behalf of her father, to attend the opera with them.

For Theresa, it was marvelous, after these many years, to be enjoying a performance of "Lohengrin" in this spacious and beautiful theatre, particularly with Thilda at her side. She felt almost like an older sister, and hardly required the excellent perfection of the performance to make her happy. Herr Verkade, too, had been invited to join the box party.

Afterwards, they supped in the elegant restaurant of a hotel. There Theresa, in her poor dress, no longer felt like Thilda's older sister, particularly since the Dutchman talked almost exclusively to Thilda, while the generally talkative father seemed engrossed in his own thoughts. Theresa ascribed his abstraction to possible business difficulties, but was not particularly affected by the contingency. She continued to ruminate, picturing the old factory in bankruptcy, Wohlschein's fortune lost, and Thilda, no longer a rich young lady, but a poor girl forced to earn her own living, and consequently that much the closer to her.

But the real cause of Herr Wohlschein's ill humour, or what Theresa had mistaken as such, became apparent several days later, when Thilda surprised her in her light matter-of-fact way with the intelligence of her betrothal to Herr Verkade. The wedding would occur late in autumn. The future home of the married couple would presumably be Amsterdam, for which destination Herr Verkade had, incidentally, departed yesterday for a prolonged stay. As Thilda spoke, a frozen smile was fixed on Theresa's features, which might be construed as an expression of the congratulations she could not formulate into words.

She could not understand Herr Wohlschein for giving permission to this betrothal, and thought him weak or devoid of feeling. She even thought of baser motives for his action. Perhaps his firm was in financial straits, and Herr Wohlschein had actually contrived the engagement to save himself and his factory. She refused to believe that a mere child actually loved this man, who was twenty or more years her senior, and neither particularly interesting nor even handsome. She was inclined to consider this pretty young thing as an innocent victim, hardly conscious of her sacrifice. She even planned to talk to Herr Wohlschein. But she immediately realized the futility of such an expedient. Indeed, she knew that Thilda was not the type of girl who could be persuaded or bullied into any act that did not meet with her full approval.

The thought of the impending separation so engrossed her that she hardly felt the many other minor and major cares of the day. Having lost a number of pupils, she was forced to live on a still more meagre scale than ever. She was barely conscious of the actual privations which she endured. Even the fact that Franz, one night, had suddenly reappeared with a small satchel, and accepted as his right her bed and food, without a word of thanks or explanation, was merely one added unpleasantness, though one no more grievous than the others. At first, he seldom disturbed her. Ordinarily, he rested on the couch until noon, disappearing after his meal and reappearing late at night, or even in the small hours of morning. He never came in contact with her pupils — a thing which she was most anxious to avoid.

Sometimes Franz, who was behaving more quietly and politely than before, would be called for by friends after the meal. One of them was a tall, rather handsome lad, who looked as if he might be a student of the poorer middle-class. In another person, however, she recognized the evil-looking individual whom Franz had sent to her house for money. He seemed specially garbed to awaken the suspicions of every policeman, with

his loud-patterned, gray trousers, short brown jacket, gray cap, and the small ring hanging from the lobe of his left ear. His voice was hoarse; his glance, evasive and threatening.

Theresa was ashamed to have such a creature received at her house, and afraid lest the neighbours might see him emerge from the door of her flat. She could not help speaking of this to Franz. He suddenly stepped in front of her and roughly forbade her to offend his friend.

“He comes of a better family than I do,” he shouted. “He, at least, has a father!”

Theresa shrugged her shoulders and left the room. Even that scarcely touched her spirit, which was now freighted with more painful things.

LXXXVII



THILDA CONTINUED TO attend classes regularly. She never discussed her intended husband, nor even the approaching marriage; so that Theresa occasionally was convinced that the engagement was broken. But, at another Sunday dinner at the Wohlschein home, attendee as well by the sister of the master, only the topic of the marriage was discussed and things relevant thereto: Dutch lessons which Thilda had begun to take, and of which Theresa now for the first time learned; her trousseau; the Verkade villa on the Zandvord shore; the farm in Java, belonging to one of the intended husband's brothers. And Herr Wohlschein was today neither sullen nor meditative, but quite gay, as if the marriage absolutely met with his approval and it were the most natural thing in the world to dismiss one's own daughter, a child to whom he was sincerely attached, into the world and to lose her for ever.

The wedding occurred earlier than originally planned, during the first days of July, in the City Hall. Theresa heard of it the next day when a printed announcement came by mail. The card in her hand, she now admitted that she had known all along that this would happen. She felt that Thilda, after the last lesson, had pressed her hand more significantly than ever before. She also remembered a parting look at the door, in which she seemed to detect at once an expression of regret and a trace of mockery, like that of a child who had perpetrated some prank as yet undiscovered by its victim.

Theresa, all the same, hoped to receive a personal note during the honeymoon. Nothing of the sort happened, nor was to happen for a long time. Neither letter, nor card, nor greeting of any kind, arrived.

One fine summer evening, toward the end of the week, Theresa walked toward Mariahilf with the hardly sincere resolve of congratulating Herr Wohlschein on his daughter's wedding. But once before the house, she saw the shuttered windows and remembered that Herr Wohlschein had, weeks before, expressed the intention of starting on his vacation immediately after the wedding. She slowly started back to her home, through the half-deserted, summer-baked streets. Even Franz had gone. Theresa, the day before, had thrown him out when he came home late at night, in the company of a friend and a girl. She had seen none of them; but their laughter and whisperings had awakened her from sleep. At first, Franz had tried to lie, claiming that no woman had been present. Then, with a defiant shrug of his shoulders, he finally admitted it, packed his belongings, and left the house without saying good-bye.

As July advanced and the last pupils left for their vacations, the loneliness which enveloped Theresa was complete. As was her habit, she rose early each morning and was at a loss how to dispose of her day. Her housework was finished in no time at all. Walks during the morning hours through the hot streets wearied her. She tried to read during the afternoons, for the most part novels that either bored or else superfluously excited her by describing exotic environments and delicate love scenes.

Walks over the Ring or through the parks at dusk left her profoundly sad. It still happened that, during these hours, men in quest of adventure would follow her; but she was too abashed to let them talk to her, or even accompany her. She knew that her appearance was still sufficiently youthful. But in her heart, she carried the picture that the mirror used to reveal to her each morning when she arose: a pale, finely chiselled face, prematurely withered, with two heavy, gray streaks in her otherwise still full dark blond hair. When her loneliness, patiently borne all day, pressed at night like a heavy burden on her shoulders, she would think for the briefest of moments of calling on her brother. But she always abandoned the idea, uncertain how he would welcome her, or, if he would receive her at all. And to call on her mother, after having avoided her for a

whole year, seemed too difficult.

And yet, one fine summer morning, she resolved to go thither, as if her decision were born of a dream. It was not longing. Nor was it the instinct of fulfilling a long-forgotten duty which suddenly drove her there, but simply the circumstance that she did not know any one else who might lend her the money to spend a few quiet weeks in the country. For the desire to leave town for at least a few days, to flee to the country, had grown overwhelmingly compelling within her, as if her health and her happiness rested upon that, and that alone. And these terms — country, rest, renascence — she had lately come to identify with the picture of a certain grassy spot in Ensbach where, many, many years ago, she had played with a little boy who had then been her child.

Theresa's mother was living in an ugly four-story tenement house on the Hemalser Hauptstrasse, occupying a dingy hall-room with a window. Theresa did not know whether the money which her mother had earned so abundantly these many years had been lost in speculating, whether it had been given away foolishly, or whether it was merely parsimony which caused her mother to lead the miserable existence she did. Small as was the hope of securing a loan from that source, it was perhaps the impetuousness of her desire, perhaps her mother's quite genuine joy at her unexpected visit, or perhaps merely the definiteness with which Theresa expressed her wish, which caused her mother, without hesitation to declare herself ready to put 150 gulden at Theresa's disposal — against a note, to be sure, which obligated her to repay the money not later than November first, with interest at two per cent monthly, in case this date was not kept. Beyond these stipulations, she hardly asked her daughter for what purpose she needed the money; in fact, she asked her nothing at all concerning herself. She merely chattered, in a strange, uninhibited way, of her daily tasks, gossiped about her uninteresting neighbours, abruptly showed her the manuscript of her new novel — hundreds of pages, closely covered with script, which she kept in a drawer in the kitchen — vaguely answered the questions which Theresa asked about her brother's family, greeted a woman across the street through the open window when she watered her flowers, and finally permitted her daughter to depart, without attempting to detain her and without asking her to call again.

LXXXVIII



THERESA LEFT FOR Ensbach the very next day. It was six years since she had last been there. Shortly after the death of her husband, the widow Leutner had remarried and moved to an adjacent village. Theresa had first planned to engage a room in a farmhouse, but, fearing the possibility of contact with her former acquaintances, she decided to live at the inexpensive village inn.

On her first short stroll through the familiar countryside, over the grassy fields to the nearby woods, she met occasional villagers whom she remembered. Nobody seemed to recognize her. She was as isolated as she had wished she might be. But the sense of comfort which she had hoped to derive from this solitude, did not come to her. She was weary when she returned to the inn. The innkeeper recognized her while she ate supper, and even asked after Franz. With an impassiveness that caused her to shudder, she replied that he had a good position in Vienna.

During the whole of the afternoon, she remained in her room. Outside, the warm, summer air trembled. Through the shutters, the sun checkered the walls with blinding, small, white stripes. Half asleep, she lay on the uncomfortable, hard bed. Flies buzzed; voices, far and near, arose and died; all manner of noises from the street and from the fields blended into her dreams. Not until dusk did she rise and go out again. She passed the house where Franz had been a child, and which had now changed its owner. It seemed remote, as if it had never held any significance for her. In front of the house, on the grass, she noticed a low, light mist, as if autumn were sending advance couriers to announce its impending arrival. Unchanged, untouched, surrounded by withered leaves as before, and still with the crack in the glass, the image of the Virgin Mary gazed down at her from its maple tree. From the hill, she descended to the main road, bordered by unpretentious cottages.

Here and there, on porches, under hanging lamps, the summer boarders, couples, and children sat. Nothing had changed. Other children, other parents — and yet ever the same children, for this solitary walker, as their unfamiliar faces disappeared in the twilight. Over on the railway embankment, the express train rushed by, its rumble receding with incredible swiftness. And now the gloom, ever more oppressive, weighed on Theresa as she walked in the darkness.

Later on, she sat in the restaurant, eating her supper. Since she did not fancy the idea of going at once to her dingy, little, stifling room, she remained downstairs a long time. She read the "Farmer's Journal of Lower Austria," the "Leipzig Illustrated News," the "Huntsmen's and Foresters' Journal," until she was tired. Then she slept, heavily and dreamlessly, having, contrary to her habit, drunk two glasses of beer.

After a few days, however, she was able to enjoy the summer air, the tranquillity of the region, the scent of the hay, with the same zest that she had formerly experienced. She would rest on the fringe of the forest, thinking sometimes of the Franz who had been, as of some child long dead. She would feel a gentle longing for Thilda. This desire, she realized, was the sweetest that she had known in her life, and bore her to heights where she was a stranger. An old wish again awoke in her — the desire to spend her remaining days quietly somewhere in the country, surrounded by green, growing things, and as far removed from people as possible. The evening of life! she mused. The thought suddenly struck her with bold emphasis. And since she was attentively considering it, she smiled wanly. The evening of life? Had she really come so far?

Her fatigue gradually fell from her, and her cheeks grew ruddy. By the evidence of her mirror, she was decidedly rejuvenated, as compared with what she had been a few weeks ago. Vague hopes arose within her. She thought of reminding Alfred once more of her existence. Then she thought that Herr Wohlschein was

probably returned from his vacation, and that she might inquire after Thilda, who had still not deigned to write to her.

The thought of her profession, too, returned. With it came a half longing for some regular work to do. The last days of her vacation were passed in mounting impatience, almost restlessness. Rainy weather suddenly decided her to cut short her stay. She was back in town long before the date which she had set for her return.

LXXXIX



GRADUALLY, THE NUMBER of Theresa's pupils increased. Another class was formed. Rested and refreshed, she fulfilled her duties without too much effort. As was her practice, she met her pupils with the same rather distant amiability, even though some one or other of them might have been quite sympathetic to her. There was no Thilda among them.

One afternoon, in the city, she met a well-dressed, elderly gentleman, who wore a stiff, dark hat at a rather rakish angle. She recognized Herr Wohlschein only when she had come directly in front of him. Her face beamed as if some unexpected happiness had befallen her. He, on his part, was obviously glad to see her as he shook her hand.

"Why doesn't one see you ever, my dear Fraulein Fabiani? I would have written, but, unfortunately, I had no address."

Well, well, Theresa thought, that could easily have been found! But she suppressed the observation, and inquired after Thilda.

More than a fortnight often passed, she learned, without any word coming from Thilda. That was, however, hardly surprising, since the honeymoon had been transformed into a sort of vagrant trip round the world. He was surprised that Theresa should not know of it. They were now probably somewhere on the high seas. He did not expect them back before spring.

"And you, Fraulein Fabiani, are really still without news from Thilda?"

She shook her head, almost bashfully. He shrugged his shoulders.

"That's just how she is. And yet, you can take my word for it, Fraulein Fabiani, she has a very warm feeling for you."

He continued to talk — of his dreary, empty, big house, of his dull whist parties at the club, and of the sad fate of finding himself as a bachelor or widower one day, after having for years lived with a wife and child. It was as if ten years of happy, and several other years of unhappy married life, as if that whole existence with his wife and child, had become merely a dream.

She was surprised at hearing him expressing himself with such freedom and friendliness. She said nothing, for she understood his relief at this opportunity to unburden himself. Then, suddenly, he sighed, consulted his watch, and remarked that he was that night going to the theatre with several acquaintances — to an operetta, if he must confess it; not to a legitimate play. He felt in need of distraction. Did Fraulein Fabiani ever visit the theatre? She shook her head. She had not, since that night at the opera, had another such opportunity. And no time, either. Did she still give as many and — he hesitated a moment — as ill-paid lessons?

She smiled and shrugged her shoulders, realizing that he had other questions which, for the moment, he did not care or dare to ask. He took leave of her abruptly, but with a hearty "Till we meet again!"

As she continued on her way, she had the feeling that he had stopped to look after her.

The following Sunday, the mail brought her, by special delivery, an envelope containing a theatre ticket and a business card:

SIGMUND WOHLSCHEIN

LEATHER GOODS

She had expected something of the kind. And, though the form of the invitation displeased her, she accepted it....

The house was already dark when Herr Wohlschein appeared, sat down beside her, and pressed a box of candy into her hand. She nodded and smiled her thanks, but did not allow the incident to distract her. The caressing dance rhythms pleased her and she was amused by the droll libretto. She felt her cheeks redden and knew that her features softened from scene to scene. To herself, she became younger and prettier. During the intermission, Herr Wohlschein was quite gallant to her, although not utterly at ease. When the play ended and they stood in the foyer beside the cloak room, he remained at her side, but not in the manner of an escort; rather, like a person who has made a casual encounter at the theatre.

It was a beautiful, clear autumn evening. She wished to walk home, and he took her the whole way. Only now he began to talk of Thilda, of whom he had not yet received intelligence. His invitation to supper she declined. He did not insist and, when they had arrived before her house, said a polite good-bye.

The week was not yet done when Herr Wohlschein again invited Theresa to the theatre — this time, to a modern society play at the People's Theatre. Afterwards, over a bottle of wine, in a comfortable corner of a restaurant, they chatted more freely and easily than the last time. He hinted of the last few difficult years of his marital life. She spoke of various sad experiences of her own, without permitting any of them to appear more than in vague outlines. When they parted, both felt that this night had drawn them closer together.

The next day, he sent, with a bunch of roses, an invitation— "in memory of Thilda" — to accompany him on a hike through the Wienerwald. And so she walked with him, in the first mild snowfall of the winter, along the same road that they had taken that spring day, half a year ago, with Thilda. Wohlschein had brought along three picture postcards from Thilda, all of which had arrived the day before. One carried a postscript: "And will you not occasionally look up Fraulein Fabiani? Her address is Wagnergasse 74, two flights up. Remember me to her. I'll write her a long letter, soon."

It was on this walk that she told Wohlschein for the first time of her boy, who had emigrated to America a year ago, and from whom she had not since heard.

After several evenings together, at the theatre or in restaurants, Herr Wohlschein knew not a little of her, despite the veil of generalities and wilful variations in which she had enshrouded her anecdotes, and which he tactfully accepted. He himself continued to talk a great deal of his wife; and he did this, to Theresa's great surprise, always in tones of the highest esteem, even of adoration, as if he were speaking of an extraordinary creature, not to be measured by the standards of ordinary mortals. Theresa began to realize that he loved Thilda really as the daughter of this lost woman, with whom she seemed to have many traits in common. And she knew that she, Theresa, had offered Thilda a more genuine, enduring, true love than had her own father.

The ensuing weeks in their relationship were not marked by any exceptional occurrences. They visited the theatre and restaurants together. He sent her flowers and candy. Then came a basket filled with preserves, exotic fruit and wine. She protested, but not too strenuously. When two holidays fell close to one another, early in December, he invited her to accompany him on a trip to a little village at the foot of the Semmering Mountains. She was convinced that, despite his former reserve, he at length hoped for certain definite results. She resolved not to forget herself.

During the journey, he grew intimate, in a rather clumsy fashion. She accepted his approaches with coldness. The fact that their hotel rooms did not adjoin at once reassured and disappointed her. Nevertheless, she failed to lock the door to her room that night. Next morning, she awoke as solitary as when she had

retired. She thought this reticence most respectful of him.

But while dressing before the mirror, she suddenly thought she discovered a more pertinent reason for his backwardness. She simply was no longer sufficiently beautiful to tempt any man. Even though her body had retained its youthful contours, her features were old and lined with care. How could it be otherwise? She had undergone too much. She was a mother; the unmarried mother of a quite grown-up boy. It had been a long time since any man had desired her. And had she herself ever felt any stirrings of desire for this elderly, commonplace man? He was the father of one of her pupils, who, for his daughter's sake, had met her to spend two days in the fresh winter air.

Only her fevered imagination, she assured herself, could have fancied the possibility of an adventure which she herself did not crave.

Dressed in her sport dress, she again appeared fresher and younger to herself; almost graceful, in fact.

After breakfasting together in the pine-seated restaurant, in a corner of which crackled a huge oven, they drove in a sleigh through the firs and pines of a narrow valley, and at noon sat in the open, in the centre of a snow entrenched glade, warmed by a sun so strong that Theresa removed her jacket and her companion his short fur overcoat and jacket. In his shirt-sleeves, his huntsman's hat with its chamois flap, and with his turned-up moist moustache, his appearance was slightly comical.

On the return trip, it turned cold rapidly. They were happy to be back in the comfortable hotel. They dined in Theresa's room, which was more cozy than the restaurant.

They returned the next day to Vienna, like a pair of lovers who had finally found one another.

XC

IT WAS AS if, from the obscure distance where he dwelt, Franz had sensed the change in the manner of her life. Just when Theresa had received another basket of edibles, he unexpectedly reappeared. At first, in his winter overcoat, he looked fairly decent; in fact, he almost inspired confidence, despite his worn and frayed velvet collar. But when he opened his coat and showed his grease-spotted tuxedo and his maculate shirt-front, the original favorable impression vanished.

"To what do I owe this pleasure?" his mother coldly inquired.

He was again without a position and homeless. The hall room which he had for a few weeks occupied, had been rented to some one else. He had been back in Vienna for some weeks.

"After all," he said pointedly, "even if one has no home, one has a home town."

He thought it most considerate on his part not to have molested her for so long. Would his mother not give him shelter and food for two or three days, as a recompense?

Theresa firmly declined. From the basket which her pupils had given her for Christmas, he might take what he needed. She would also give him ten gulden. But she kept no public house. That was final. He pocketed a few preserves, took a bottle of wine under his arm, and turned to go.

The heels of his shoes were worn. His neck was scrawny, his ears protruded, and his back was strangely bent.

"Well, you needn't be in such a hurry," Theresa said, suddenly moved. "Sit down a while and tell me about yourself."

He turned round with a laugh.

"After such a reception, I wouldn't think of it!"

He opened the door and banged it so rudely that the house shook.

She told Wohlschein of the visit. When he called for her a week later and found her pale and excited, her eyes still red with weeping, she could not help confess that, for the second time within a week, Franz had come to demand money of her. She had lacked the courage to deny him. Now she confessed that Franz had never gone to America at all, but had led a fugitive life here in Vienna, of which she knew nothing and cared to know less.

Her tongue once loosened, she more frankly related, and at greater length, what suffering he had caused her. She first thought that Wohlschein was quite disagreeably affected. The more he listened, the more pity he felt. Finally, he declared that he simply could not watch her paltry and tormented life any longer. He felt ashamed to be carelessly rolling in wealth, while she — oh, he had noticed it — sometimes lacked the very necessities.

She protested. Under no circumstances would she listen to his proffer of a small monthly allowance to better her condition. She made a decent living, she said. It was her pride — her sole remaining pride, perhaps — that all her life she had been able to maintain herself, and for a long time, her son as well, on her earnings.

But when, on another occasion, he insisted on being allowed to replenish some of her worn wardrobe, she no longer protested. When a severe cold confined her for some weeks to her bed, she was obliged to permit him to pay for the doctor and prescriptions, and the necessary improved quality of food; eventually, too, to indemnify her for the money lost through having had to give up her lessons. He also insisted, thenceforward, that she should take better care of herself. Nothing remained for her but to accept his aid with gratitude.

XCI

ONE DAY IN January, they were given a wonderful surprise. Thilda arrived suddenly, though her father did not even know that the young couple had returned to Europe. Theresa learned the news from Wohlschein, who telephoned her. She owed the telephone, by the way, to his generosity. He excused himself from meeting her that evening, as they had planned, Thilda's coming having disrupted the even current of his present life. He excused himself so hurriedly, so embarrassedly, and with such an obvious sense of guilt, that Theresa had no opportunity to ask a question. As she hung up the receiver, she felt no joy; she only felt dismay and a heavy oppression.

She felt wronged, betrayed. And doubly so by Thilda, who had never written to her; never even included a message for her in the meagre news sent to her father. And by Wohlschein, to whom — how keenly she felt it! — she was again an unimportant, even disturbing interloper, now that Thilda was back.

All the following day — how correctly she had guessed how matters stood! — he did not communicate with her. Toward noon of the third day, he appeared. Certainly he had chosen an untoward hour, for she was not prepared to receive him. After her recent illness, from which she was not yet fully recovered, and in a grey flannel house-dress, with her hair in disorder, she did not look as well as she would have wished. But he seemed to notice nothing; he was inattentive and in high spirits.

The first thing he said was that Thilda had immediately asked after her and would particularly like to see her for dinner next Sunday. Theresa, however, felt no gladness at this. Suddenly and painfully, she realized her position. She was the mother of an illegitimate child, and had yielded herself too often to unworthy men. And she had become the maintained mistress of Thilda's father. Though she said nothing, Wohlschein realized what her thoughts must be. He tried to console her with caresses. She at first remained rigid and cold. But she gradually became conscious of the happiness she felt in Thilda's return, in the sure knowledge that she would again see her on the morrow. When she asked him to remember her to the beloved creature, she had sufficiently recovered a certain composure to remark good-naturedly:

"You need not tell her that you called on me. We might have met on the street."

He was prepared to go, his fur overcoat already donned, and holding his stick and hat in his hand. He replied, with pompous seriousness:

"I have, of course, informed her that we have been seeing a great deal of one another, and that we are — very good friends."

Thilda greeted Theresa as nonchalantly as if they had bid each other farewell the preceding day. This fact was stressed by her girlish, unaltered, still delicate appearance. She seemed, however, slightly more pallid than before. On her side, Thilda found that Theresa had changed for the better, that she seemed, in fact, rejuvenated. She inquired after several of her fellow students of the past year, without waiting for the replies, and presented greetings from her husband.

"He did not accompany you?" Theresa innocently asked, as if compelled not to appear informed.

"Certainly not," Thilda replied. "That would have been improper."

She blushed slightly and continued:

"One must be quite the young girl when returning home." She spoke as if she were quoting.

"You are here only for a few days?"

"Naturally, my visit will be a short one. Herr Verkade" — thus she termed her husband, and it did not

affect Theresa disagreeably— "did not want to let me come at all. Well, I presented him with a *fait accompli*, I bought my ticket from a traveller's bureau, packed my trunks, and, next day, told him: Tonight at eight-thirty my train leaves.'"

"And were you quite homesick?"

Thilda shook her head.

"In such a case, I might not have come at all."

And, answering Theresa's somewhat astonished glance with a smile which seemed to comprehend it, she explained:

"I would, in that event, have tried to suppress my longing. Where would one be, if one yielded to every longing? No, I was not particularly homesick. But now I am really glad to be back. Besides, lest I forget..."

She presented Theresa with a little package, which had been laying on the couch. As Theresa opened it, discovering a big box of Dutch chocolates and a half dozen of the finest silk handkerchiefs, Herr Wohlschein, accompanied by his sister, entered the room. While the aunt embraced Thilda, Wohlschein and Theresa could, without embarrassment, exchange cordial glances.

They were the only guests invited. Dinner passed pleasantly, as in the past, in quiet contentment. Had Thilda not related sundry details of her trip and of her new home, one might have believed — Wohlschein did not hesitate to say as much — that she had not been away at all. But she talked more of the hours when, alone between heaven and the sea, she lay on her deck-chair, than of landscapes and cities seen, or of the house with the immense glass windows and numerous flowerbeds in which she now lived. And though, in her fashion, Thilda praised the glorious boredom of these days, Theresa sensed that these hours of solitude, of distance, had been the truest and deepest adventures of this journey — more important than the visit to a South American *hacienda* which she described; or than the view from the heights overlooking Rio de Janeiro on the bay glowing with myriads of lights; or more impressive even than the dance with the young French astronomer, who had utilized that same ship to observe a solar eclipse in South America.

Shortly after the meal, Theresa took leave, secretly hoping that Thilda would ask her to remain. But she did not. She even neglected to make any definite appointment for the next few days, and only uttered a sincere, though non-committal:

"I hope to see you again, before I leave."

"I, too," Theresa replied, though timidly. Then she added:

"Please remember me to Herr Verkade."

The package of chocolates and the handkerchiefs in her hand, she said good-bye and slowly descended the stairs — a former teacher, to whom a married pupil had considerately brought a small keepsake.

That evening at home was unspeakably dreary. Two sad days followed, during which news was forthcoming neither from Wohlschein nor from Thilda.

Dolorous thoughts arose within her.

XCII



AT AN EARLY hour on the morning of the third day, Herr Wohlschein appeared in person. He had returned directly from the station, whence he had escorted Thilda, who, upon receiving an urgent telegram from her husband, had departed earlier than she had anticipated. She had probably acted with more independence and superiority than she really possessed in returning home. How hastily, how excitedly she had torn open the telegram; how she had frowned, and then laughed lightly, blushing a deep scarlet! But it was difficult to say whether she coloured from wrath or pleasure. One thing was certain, and that was that she was already in the express train that would carry her to Holland and to the arms of an impatient husband. She had deeply regretted not having the chance to see Fraulein Fabiani a second time, and asked to be remembered to her.

But now, there was something else, something pleasant to tell, something wonderfully agreeable. Could she guess? He took her by the chin, as he might a small girl, and kissed the tip of her nose, as he liked to do — much to Theresa's displeasure — when he was in good spirits.

Theresa unfortunately could not guess that pleasant thing. An invitation, perhaps, to Holland for Whitsuntide?

One to spend the summer at Zandvord in a cottage? No, not that. No such invitation could be expected, for this year, at least. What, then? She was not clever at solving riddles. He must be good enough to tell her what it was that would make her so happy.

Yesterday, at table, Thilda had made a remark that was most characteristic of her, and that yet had come as a thunderbolt.

"Well, Father," she had said, "why don't you marry her?"

"Marry whom?" Herr Wohlschein had asked.

Did Thilda take him for a Don Juan, who could at will ask any number of ladies to become his wife? No. Thilda's question had obviously meant Fraulein Fabiani, and none other.

"Why don't you marry her?"

She could not understand why he, Herr Wohlschein, did not take Theresa for his wife. The clever little rascal had at once realized how matters stood between them, even from the way he wrote Theresa's name in his letters to his daughter.

Yes, she was a graphologist. She had added:

"You could probably do nothing better. You have my blessings!"

And what did Fraulein Theresa think of the possibility?

Though she smiled, her smiled lacked gaiety. And Herr Wohlschein wondered why no answer other than this forced smile rewarded him. Theresa was even more surprised. What she felt was not joy, and certainly not happiness; only unrest, if not actually fear — fear of the great change that such an occurrence would bring into her life, and to which a woman of her age, accustomed as she was to independence, would find it difficult to adjust herself. Or was it perhaps the horror of being irrevocably bound to this man, whom she liked a little, but whose love seemed unimportant, even at times distasteful, to her, and most often slightly comical. Did she perhaps vaguely fear the disagreeable incidents which might threaten her in connection with her son, and for which Wohlschein, unable to avoid them, might in the long run hold her accountable?

"Why don't you speak?" he finally asked.

Theresa then took his hand. Somewhat hurriedly, with features that lit up too quickly, and in a tone at first

dubious, then bantering, she asked:

“Do you think I would be the right wife for you?” Reassured, he seized her in his awkward, bearish fashion, which she usually detested, but which she now tolerated so as not to endanger the spirit, and with it perhaps more than the mere spirit.

He wished her to cut down the number of her lessons, beginning the following day. At first, she would not listen, even insisting that, after her marriage, she must have some occupation from which she would derive satisfaction and occasional joy. Notwithstanding this, she refused to accept a new pupil, who applied shortly afterwards. She cut down the number of her weekly lessons from six to three. This Wohlschein accepted as a special favour.

XCIII



LETTER SOON ARRIVED from Franz, with a curt demand for money. He also mentioned a forwarding address, to which the sum of 100 gulden should be sent without delay. Theresa would not and could not withhold this incident from her betrothed, especially since this amount would have been missing when her rent fell due. Wohlschein gave her the sum without much ado, but took the occasion, for which he had apparently been waiting, to mention a plan of his own — he was ready to pay Franz's transportation to America, or rather — you could not afford to neglect anything with such a man — to send him to Hamburg in company with one of his trusted employees, who would buy the ticket for him and see him installed on the steamer. But instead of gratefully accepting Wohlschein's proposal as a welcome solution of her problem, Theresa interposed fears and objections; and the more insistent Wohlschein became, citing innumerable excellent reasons for his attitude, the more obstinately she insisted that she could not bear the thought of being separated by the width of the Atlantic from her son; and that, especially now that her own circumstances had taken such a decided turn for the better such an action would appear to her heartlessly selfish, and even as a sin which would sometime return to accuse her. Wohlschein contradicted her; and, as frequently happens in such cases, each one placed too high a value upon his own opinion, with the result that the quarrel grew more and more violent. Wohlschein strode up and down the room, his face distorted, while Theresa finally burst into tears. Then they both realized that they had gone too far. Theresa perceived at the same moment that her attitude toward her future husband certainly lacked prudence; but their relationship was still sufficiently young for the dispute to end in caresses.

But when Wohlschein, a few days later, departed on a short trip concerning which he had mentioned nothing in advance, Theresa was not so sure that this temporary parting was not intended to prepare the way for a definite break; and the unusually large sum which he left for her as a gift almost confirmed her fears. She felt, however, that this temporary separation was good for her spirit, and she imagined that she could bear the thought of a final parting without great agitation.

He returned sooner than she had expected and met her with such a strange reserve that at first she was again troubled. He did not keep her long in suspense, but said that he had interested himself in the affairs of her son on his own responsibility, and had learned that Franz at that moment was serving a prison sentence of several months — not his first one, as she probably knew. No, she knew nothing. Well, what did Theresa think now? Did she wish — did they both wish — to spend the remainder of their lives under such a strain? Gould one foresee where this fellow might end, what he might do, into what painful situations he might yet bring them, in case he remained within the city or in the country? He, Wohlschein, personally and with the aid of a reliable private detective who had aided him before in other investigations, desired to arrange everything, once and for all. Perhaps they could manage to start Franz on his journey to Hamburg and to America directly he had left the prison walls.

Theresa listened quietly, without protest; but from moment to moment, she felt an increasingly corroding and terrible torment in her heart, which nobody, above all not Wohlschein, could have understood; indeed she hardly understood it herself.

"When will he be free again?" she asked. She said nothing else.

"He has another six weeks to serve, I think."

She remained silent, but resolved to visit Franz in jail, and embrace him one last time before she took leave

of him for ever.

And yet, she postponed that visit again and again. For although the thought of never seeing Franz again was most painful to her, she did not really feel any longing for him; on the contrary, she was almost unwilling to face him. Nothing further was said between her and Wohlschein of the whole affair; nor was the question of the wedding date discussed. Nevertheless, the character of her relationship became somewhat more formal. While, thus far, he had frequented ordinary restaurants when in her company, they now occasionally ate at the best places in town. Sometimes, too, he spent the entire night with her, and finally, he invited her for Sunday lunch at his own house. But the courtship was lacking in spirit and gaiety. And that Wohlschein, in spite of the fact that they were as good as betrothed, continued to address her with formal reserve when in the presence of the servants, and did not admit the truth when later his sister arrived, apparently without having been invited, appeared just a little too cautious and almost in bad taste.

XCIV



As far as the evening's entertainment went, he no longer repressed his rather cheap tastes. One night they visited a vaudeville house in one of the suburbs — a tenth-rate music hall, where the entertainment was poor enough to be mistaken for parody. A singer, about fifty years old, appeared, ridiculously painted, in a short gauze frock. With a broken voice, she sang an arch comic song about a Lieutenant, saluting in military fashion at the end of each stanza. A clown produced sleight-of-hand tricks, such as could be found in any of the magic sets purchasable at children's toy shops. An elderly man in a silk hat exhibited two trained poodles. A Tyrolese quartette, consisting of a heavily bearded man, a grotesquely thin dotard with piercing eyes, and two fat, colourless peasant girls in Greek laced shoes, sang songs and yodeled. A troupe of acrobats, "The Three Windsors," turned out to be a fat man in dirty tricot lifting two children of about ten and having them juggle; the children, after some listless applause, stepping forward and blowing kisses to the audience.

While Theresa grew melancholy, her escort seemed to be in his element. Theresa was surprised to find that this house could support a small orchestra, consisting of an upright piano, violin, 'cello, and clarinet. On top of the piano stood a glass of beer for the piano player. One of the other musicians reached for it now and then, and took a sip. Finally, a ridiculous paper curtain was lowered with a crackling sound. On it was painted a Muse in a blue tricot, with a purple belt, carrying a lyre in her arm; she was accompanied by a shepherd lad, wearing sandals and red tights.

Theresa's eyes automatically followed the beer glass, which at that moment again disappeared from the piano.

She observed the hand that had taken the glass — an emaciated, hairy hand, protruding from a cuffless, green and white striped shirt-sleeve. It belonged to the 'cello player, who had left the others for a moment to play alone. He raised the glass to his lips and drank. Some of the foam remained on his grey moustache. He raised himself slightly from his chair to restore the glass on the piano. While taking his bow, he bent over to the clarinet player to whisper something in his ear. Without paying any attention to him, the clarinettist kept on blowing. The other person, however, quite stupidly wagged his head from side to side, and licked the foam off his moustache.

His forehead was unnaturally high. His dark, greyish, short-cropped hair stood up like bristles. He half closed one eye when he joined the others again in playing. He had a poor instrument and, besides, played so obviously out of tune that he deserved the glare the pianist directed at him.

The curtain was raised again. A negro in greasy swallowtail coat and grey top-hat entered and was greeted by the audience with loud shouts of derision. The 'cellist raised his bow, saluting the coloured man on the stage, though nobody but Theresa — not even the negro — observed it.

There was no doubt about it: it was Kasimir Tobisch who was playing the 'cello in this dingy place. She was sitting far in front. Wohlschein filled her wine glass. She raised it to her lips, staring fixedly at Kasimir until she had forced him to answer her glance. He regarded her, then her companion, then the audience round about, let his eyes return to her and withdrew his glance. He had obviously not recognized her.

The performance proceeded. A dirty-looking Pierrot, a tubercular Pierrette, and a drunken Harlequin offered, almost with desperation, a pantomime. Theresa in fact forgot, for a brief time, that Kasimir Tobisch was playing the 'cello there; forgot that her son was a jailed thief and pimp; forgot even the man beside her, comfortably smoking his cigar through a white holder. With him, she laughed when Harlequin, in attempting

to embrace Pierrette, fell prone on the floor.

Several hours later, however, in bed beside her snoring lover, she lay sleepless, weeping silently, her heart in pain.

XCV

AT AN EARLY morning hour, while Theresa was still giving her lessons, Karl appeared, to her great surprise. The expression on his face, the very manner of his entrance, augured ill. When she asked him to wait for a quarter of an hour, until the class was finished, he brusquely asked her to dismiss "her young ladies." The last three words he pronounced with contempt. What he had to say brooked no delay. Theresa could not but fulfil his wish.

He turned his face away while the young girls passed him, not caring to greet them. Alone with his sister, he began:

"Your son, the scoundrel, has had the impudence to send me this letter from jail."

He handed it to Theresa, who read as follows:

My dear Uncle:

Since I am about to leave jail after serving a terra, although I am innocent, and as I intend to begin a new life far from home, I respectfully ask you, in view of our close relationship, to contribute toward my expenses. I want 200 gulden of Austrian denomination. They are to be held in readiness, beginning tomorrow.

With the expression of my highest esteem, I am, dear Uncle,

Your nephew,

Franz.

Theresa lowered the letter and shrugged her shoulders. "Well!" Karl shouted. "Be good enough to say something!"

Theresa, quite unmoved, replied:

"I have nothing to do with this letter, and I don't know what you want of me."

"That's really excellent. Your son, in jail, writes me a blackmail letter — yes, it's blackmail!"

He tore the letter from her hand and pointed to the line: "in view of our close relationship... to be held in readiness, beginning tomorrow."

"The scoundrel knows that I hold public office. He will go to other people, beg, tell them that he is my nephew, the nephew of Representative Faber..."

"I can find no such intention in the letter. You are, in fact, his uncle."

This detached, mocking attitude completely infuriated him.

"And you dare to defend the rascal! Do you think I don't know that he has sent us letters before, asking for money? My wife, good-natured, but as stupid as ever, tried to hide them from me. Do you think you can hide anything from me? You think I don't know the kind of life you live under cover of your so-called profession? Yes, look at me with those big cow eyes! Some day you will lie on a manure pile, like your fine son. Do you think me blind? No! You are content with things. When you are shown a way out and get a donkey foolish enough to want to marry you — no, you prefer your freedom and change your lovers like shirts. It's more comfortable; it's more fun. And with those girls here... what are you doing with them? Lessons, I suppose! Ha, ha! You are probably making them ready for Jewish libertines."

"Get out!" Theresa ordered.

She did not raise her arm, did not stretch out her hand. Almost inaudibly, she said:

"Get out!"

But Karl would not be interrupted. He continued to pour forth a flood of abuse. Theresa, he shouted, had behaved just so in her youth. And she continued to do so, at an age when other women slowly came to their senses, if for no other reason than because they feared to make themselves ridiculous. Did she really imagine that she could ever have deceived him? As a young girl, she had flirted with his friends and colleagues. And that episode with the accursed Lieutenant! And whose child that fine son of hers was who held the fate of the whole family in his hand, she herself probably did not know. And what she had later done as a governess, as the guardian of little girls — he had had vague reports of that, too. And now, he knew that, as well, she was keeping company with an elderly rich man, whom she probably tried to hold by using her pupils to..."

Wohlschein entered. He had apparently not heard or understood the last words. He nevertheless continued to stare in surprise from Theresa to Karl, and back to Theresa again. Karl thought it an opportune time to depart.

"I don't wish to disturb you any longer," he said, and with a brief, almost mocking bow to Wohlschein, he turned to leave the room.

"Just a moment, Karl!" Theresa said.

Utterly calm, she made the introduction.

"Dr. Karl Faber, my brother; Herr Wohlschein, my intended husband."

Karl distorted his mouth.

"I am honoured!" he said. "So much the more reason why I should not disturb."

"I beg your pardon," the other man said. "I am inclined to believe that I was the disturber."

"Not at all!" Theresa replied.

"Certainly not," Karl added. "Some small differences of opinion cannot be avoided in families. Please excuse me, and accept my congratulations. Good afternoon, Herr Wohlschein."

Hardly had he left the door when Theresa turned to Wohlschein.

"Please forgive me," she said, "but I was forced to say it."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I obligated you to nothing when I introduced you as my future husband. You are still quite free in your decision."

"I see what you mean. But I don't at all wish to be free, as you put it."

With clumsy tenderness, he pressed her to his breast.

"And now, I would like to know what your brother wanted."

She was glad that he had heard nothing of the conversation. She told him as much as she deemed proper. When he left, it was definitely arranged that the wedding would he held on Whitsuntide, and that Franz's departure for America would occur before that date.

XCVI

WHITSUNTIDE WAS ALMOST three months away. Wohlschein's postponement of the wedding to the distant date was due to two imperative business trips: one to Poland and another to the Tyrol; also, to certain changes which he desired to make in the house. Beyond this, various matters had to be discussed with his attorney, since it was expedient to insert a number of clauses in his will before the wedding. "We are all mortal," he said. Theresa had nothing to urge against the delay, cherishing the idea of not being forced completely to discontinue her teaching, particularly since she now found herself attracted to her duties in the same degree that they had ceased to be imperative.

It was as pure recreation that she considered those periods of Wohlschein's absence — one week in February and another in March — when she need expect no morning visits from him. Nevertheless now and then she felt something akin to longing for him. During the past few weeks, she had gradually grown accustomed to a sort of married life which — she could not gainsay it — had in every respect exercised a good influence on her. And from numerous signs, external and internal, she realized that her life as a woman was by no means ended. It added to her good spirits that now she could dress better than ever before. She looked forward eagerly to the promise he had made, to go shopping with her for the purchase of her further necessaries.

Shortly after Wohlschein's return, she spent the Easter holidays with him in a comfortable little hotel near Vienna. As yet, the days were quite cool. But the trees were already in bud, and the bushes had blossomed. There were evenings when, in her charming room, they felt like true young lovers, so that after her return, during many lonely hours in her own house, she became conscious of the fact that she would be very comfortable as Frau Wohlschein, sharing their home together. More precious, however, than everything else was a card from Thilda, which Wohlschein had shown her: "With a thousand Easter greetings for you and Theresa." Yes, that is what it said — plain "Theresa"!

As yet, she had not been able to bring herself to visit the jail. Too strong was her horror of this meeting, which at the same time was supposed to be a final parting. During the few weeks, Wohlschein had not once mentioned Franz; and Theresa thought that he meant to speak only after everything had been arranged. In point of fact, soon after returning from their Easter vacation, he told her that he had sent his attorney to the jail, but that Franz, for the time being, would hear nothing of the American plans. He was not sentenced to deportation, he had declared. Nevertheless, Wohlschein felt confident that the promise of a larger sum of money, to be paid to him upon his arrival in America, would substantially alter his point of view.

XCVII

A FEW DAYS later, Theresa was expecting Wohlschein, who was to call for her at ten in the morning with a carriage, to go shopping, as they had done a few times before. It was a warm spring day. The windows were open, and the near-by woods scattered their fragrance. Wohlschein was habitually punctual. A half hour after the appointed time, she began to wonder. Already dressed for the streets, she stood waiting at the window. Another half hour passed. She grew restless, and decided to telephone. There was no answer. After a time, she telephoned again.

"Who is this?" a strange voice demanded.

"I only wished to ask if Herr Wohlschein has already left the house."

"Who is this speaking?" the unknown voice insisted.

"Theresa Fabiani."

"Oh, Fraulein Fabiani, it is too dreadful!" — now she recognized the voice of the old bookkeeper— "Herr Wohlschein, yes, Herr Wohlschein suddenly died!"

"What?"

"They found him this morning, dead, in bed!"

"For God's sake!" She rushed downstairs.

She did not think of using the street car or of taking a carriage. Mechanically, as if in a drugged dream — not exactly shocked, and at first, hardly in haste, although later almost running — she made her way toward the Zieglergasse.

There was the house, seemingly unchanged. A carriage was standing before the door, as happened frequently enough. She ran up the stairs. The door was locked. Theresa had to ring the bell. The maid opened.

"Good morning, Fraulein Fabiani!"

For a moment, Theresa thought that it was not true; that she had misunderstood, or that some one had played an impudent jest at her expense. And she asked, with a strange feeling that her question might still alter the situation:

"Is Herr Wohlschein..."

But she did not finish.

"Why, don't you know?"

Now she nodded quickly, made a meaningless, protesting gesture with her hand, and, without further question, opened the door to the living room. Grouped round the table, she saw the bookkeeper and two gentlemen whom she did not know. One of them was on the point of leaving. Two ladies were sitting near the fireplace; one of them, the sister of the deceased. Theresa went over to her.

"Is it really true?"

The sister nodded and took her hand. Theresa stopped helplessly. The door to the adjoining room stood ajar. Theresa walked over, and felt them all watching her. The dining room was empty. At the window of the next room, the small smoking-room, two men were standing, conversing earnestly but softly. The next door, too, stood open. Here was Wohlschein's bed.

The outline of a human figure, covered with a white sheet, was recognizable. There, then, he lay dead, as alone as only dead men can be. Theresa felt no pain — nothing except embarrassment and strangeness. She would have liked to kneel down, but something restrained her. Why did they leave her alone? The sister

might have followed her. Had the last will already been read? Was she thinking of that now? Of course, it was not without importance — this much she knew even at this moment. But everything else was more important than that. He was dead — the lover, the future husband, the good man to whom she owed so much!

Thilda's father! Ah, now Thilda would have to come, too! Had they wired her already? Certainly! Under this sheet was his face! Why were the candles not burning? Yesterday, at this hour, she had been at Herrenhuter's with him, to order bed linen. What were they whispering in the next room? The stranger with the black moustache was probably the attorney. Did the people at all surmise who she was? Well, the sister certainly knew. She might have been a little more sympathetic to the sweetheart of her dead brother. If she were his wife, they would all behave differently, that was sure!

I want to go in to his sister again, she thought. We are the two real mourners, we and Thilda. Before she left the room, she made the sign of the cross. Should she not have looked upon the face of the deceased? But she did not want to see his face again. She was afraid of it, that rather fat, shiny face. Yes, he had been a little fat — that was perhaps why... But he had been no more than fifty... And now she was his widow, without ever having been married to him.

On the table in the living room she saw cakes, wine and glasses.

"Don't you want to take something, Fraulein Fabiani?" the sister asked.

"Thank you, no," Theresa replied.

She took nothing, but sat down beside the ladies. The sister introduced her. Theresa did not understand the name of the lady. And she heard her own: "Fraulein Fabiani, for many years Thilda's teacher."

The lady extended her hand.

"The poor child!" the lady said.

The sister nodded.

"By now, she probably has the telegram."

"Does she live in Amsterdam, or at the Hague?" the stranger asked.

"In Amsterdam," the sister replied.

"Were you ever in Holland?"

"No, never. This summer I wanted to go there, with my poor brother."

A brief silence.

"Sometimes pains in the heart," the sister replied. And then, to Theresa:

"Don't you really want to take something, Fraulein Fabiani? A sip of wine?"

Theresa accepted a glass of wine. An elderly man in a gray summer suit came in. With a sorrowful expression on his face, his round, sad eyes wandering round the room, he approached the sister and shook her hand, twice, three times.

"This is terrible! So unexpected!"

The sister sighed.

Then he gave Theresa his hand, and only when he had done so became aware that he did not know her. The sister introduced him. Theresa could not understand the name of the man. Then, again:

"Fraulein Fabiani, for years the teacher of my niece, Thilda!"

"The poor child," the gentleman remarked.

Theresa said good-bye. Nobody detained her.

XCVIII

WOHLSCHEIN IN HIS last will had stipulated for a simple burial. His entire estate had been bequeathed to Thilda. Legacies were given to several benevolent societies, and ample provision was made for his divorced wife. The old employees of the factory were not forgotten, and the servants, too, received their share; the piano teachers, two former governesses, and Fraulein Fabiani, under a codicil made the previous summer, received one thousand gulden each. Through a special provision, the deceased had arranged that the heirs should be notified immediately after the reading of the will, and should receive their respective shares directly after the testator's decease.

Theresa was asked to call on the attorney, to receive her share in person. She recognized in him one of the men whom she had seen at the home of the deceased. He seemed to know everything, and volubly regretted the premature death of Herr Wohlschein, who, shortly before his death, had declared his intention of making radical changes in his last will, but had — unfortunately, although characteristically enough, — postponed the matter until it was too late.

Theresa was hardly disappointed. Only now did she realize that she had never really expected to become Frau Wohlschein; that she had never believed a quiet, untroubled existence might fall to her lot, or that she might ever become Thilda Verkade's stepmother.

The next morning, she stood at Wohlschein's grave with the other relatives and friends. She too let fall some earth upon the coffin. Thilda was there. The two women exchanged a glance across the grave. Thilda's eyes held so much warmth and understanding that a dim hope, an expectation of happiness, furtively arose in Theresa's heart. Garbed in black, leaning on the arm of her tall husband — closer than any human contact that Theresa could have imagined Thilda as capable of suffering — thus Theresa saw her, after the ceremony, walk through the gate of the cemetery and disappear.

It was arranged that Theresa should call on her, the following afternoon, at the house in the Zieglergasse. But she could not muster sufficient courage for the ordeal. The morning afterward, when she really wished to call, the daughter of the dead man had already departed with her husband.

XCIX

AND NOW SHE was alone — completely alone, as she had never been before. She had never been in love with Wohlschein. And yet, how painful it was, evening after evening, never to see the door open again, never to hear the bell outside announce his coming.

And then, once, the bell rang, late in the evening. Her knowledge of the irrevocable annihilation of Wohlschein had not as yet become an integral part of her existence; and so, for the fraction of a second, she thought: He! What does he want so late at night? Of course, before she had arisen, she had realized that it might be any one in the world save only him.

It was Franz who stood before her door. Was he already free? In the dimly lighted hall, his cap pulled down over his forehead, a cigarette end between his lips, emaciated and pale, his glance uncertain and dejected, he seemed rather more pitiable than dangerous. But Theresa felt nothing: neither pity nor dread. Perhaps she felt a certain satisfaction that, after all, at least some one had come who, for a moment, would relieve her of the heavy pressure of loneliness which weighed upon her.

"Good evening, Franz!" she said, calmly. He looked up, as it surprised at the mild, almost loving tone of her welcome.

"Good evening, Mother!"

She gave him her hand, and even kept holding his in hers as she led him in. She turned on the light.

"Sit down."

He remained standing.

"So you are already free?"

She said it quiet casually, as if she had said: "Are you back from your trip?"

"Yes," he answered, "since yesterday. They gave me a week for good behaviour. What do you think of that, Mother? So you don't need to be afraid. I have even found myself lodgings. But I have nothing else."

He laughed shortly.

Without answering, Theresa laid the table for him, gave him what she had in the house, and poured out a glass of wine.

He ate ravenously. When she put a piece of smoked salmon before him, he said: —

"You seem to be well-off, Mother!"

And suddenly there was a threat, a demand in his voice. "Not quite as well-off as you may think!" she replied.

He laughed.

"I won't take anything away from you, Mother!"

"You would not find much, any more."

"Well, thank goodness, new supplies will come soon."

"I don't know from where."

Franz glanced at her menacingly.

"I wasn't in for burglary, you know! If somebody forgets his pocketbook, I can't help it. My lawyer claimed, too, that they could sentence me only because I had kept something I had found."

She protested.

"I didn't ask you for an explanation!" she exclaimed. He kept on eating. Then suddenly he said:

“But I don’t want to hear about America! I can get along here just as well. The day after tomorrow, I start work. Yes! Thank God, a fellow still has friends who won’t leave him in the lurch when he has a stroke of bad luck!”

Theresa shrugged her shoulders.

“Why should a healthy young man not be able to find a position? I only wish it may last, this time.”

“As far as I was concerned, the others would have lasted, too. But people think you’ve got to stand for everything! And I’m too good for that. I won’t stand for anything from anybody. Do you understand that, Mother? And if I wanted to go to America, I’d go by myself. I won’t be packed off! Tell that to your — your man!” Theresa remained absolutely calm.

“He meant well,” she said. “You may believe me.”

“What was meant well?” he answered, rudely.

“This trip to America. But you can rest in peace. It won’t happen again. The man — my intended husband — died three weeks ago.”

He looked at her incredulously, as if suspecting that by falsehood she wished to safeguard herself against fresh demands on his part. But on her pale face, in her sorrowful features, even he could read that this was not an evasion, not a lie. He kept on eating, saying nothing, and lit a cigarette. And only then — and as cold as it sounded, as coldly as it was probably thought, for the first time Theresa detected in his voice something like a warm undertone:

“You have no luck either, Mother!”

Then he declared that he was too tired to make the journey to his distant lodgings, and stretched out as he was on the couch. Soon he fell asleep. The next morning he was gone before Theresa had arisen.

But at noon he was back again, this time carrying a dirty cardboard satchel, and saying that he wanted to stay with her for three days, until he could start on his new job — to which he never referred again. Theresa at least persuaded him to remain away during her hours of instruction. But she could not do anything against the fact that a friend and a girl — there might even have been three or four people, of whom she never caught sight — spent half the night drinking, whispering, and laughing with him. Whatever she had left from the table she gave him for his nocturnal gatherings. The fourth morning he waited in for her awakening. She gave him all that she had in the house; the larger portion of her money she had carefully put into the savings bank. And it was fortunate that she had done so, for before he left, Franz was brazen enough to rummage through all the drawers of the furniture. Then, for the next four weeks, he disappeared.

C



THE DAYS PASSED and Whitsuntide came — the day that had been set for the wedding. Theresa marked the occasion by a visit to Wohlschein's grave, upon which, among the withered wreaths without names and inscriptions, she found her bunch of violets, too. For a long while, she stood there under the clear, blue, summer sky — without praying, almost without thinking, and in fact, without any sensation of sadness. That word of her son's in which she had heard his heart speak, after its fashion, was still within her: "You have no luck either, Mother!" But in her memory, it did not refer exactly — and certainly not exclusively — to the death of her intended husband, but rather to her entire existence. Of a truth, she had not come into this world to be happy. And as Frau Wohlschein, she probably would not have been more happy than in any other condition. The fact that somebody dies is not in itself significant — it is one of the hundreds of ways in which a person disappears or sneaks away. So many were dead for her, of both the living and the dead! Dead, for example, was her father, who had been non-existent these many years. Dead, Richard, who, of all the men she had loved, had been the one nearest to her heart; and dead also her mother, whom she had told of the impending marriage only a few days before Wohlschein's demise, and who had hardly taken any notice of her words, continuing her talk about her literary estate, which she intended to bequeath to the City of Vienna. Dead was her brother, too, who had not communicated with her again after his last unwelcome visit; and dead, Alfred, who had been her lover and friend; dead, too her lost son, the pimp and thief; and Thilda, dreaming in Holland behind high, bright window-panes, who never thought of her teacher; and dead the many children, both boys and girls, for whom she had been a preceptor and sometimes almost a mother. Dead, all of the many men to whom she had belonged. And it was almost as if this Herr Wohlschein were proud that he slept so irrevocably beneath this mound, as if he took an unction to himself for being more definitely dead than the others.

Oh no, she had no special tears for him. The tears which she was shedding now flowed for so many others, and before every one else, she probably shed them for herself. And perhaps these were not tears of pain at all, but rather tears of weariness. For she was weary as she had never been weary before. At times, she was aware of nothing else but her weariness. Every evening, she sank into her bed so fatigued that she thought she would never be able to sleep enough and feel refreshed again.

But it was not destined to be so easy for her. She lived and worried on. Twice again, she was obliged to assist Franz. The first time, he came himself, in broad daylight, with a small satchel, while her pupils were in the house. He intended to stay at her house again. She sent him away, refusing even to let him in the door. But, in order to prevent worse, she could not help but give him all the ready cash she had in the house. The second time, it was not he who came, but two of his friends. They looked just like his kind, talked absurdly in stilted phrases, claimed their comrade's life and honour were at stake, and refused to leave until Theresa had again yielded up almost everything that she possessed.

Now, summer was at hand. Theresa's lessons had stopped entirely. The last few gulden she had saved had been eaten up, and she sold her insignificant trinkets — a small golden bracelet and a ring set with a semi-precious stone, which Wohlschein had given her. The small sum which she received for these was sufficient to help her over the summer until autumn, and she was even reckless enough to go to the country for a few days in August, to the same spot where she had spent the Christmas holiday with Wohlschein — although this time she stopped at a less pretentious hotel.

It was during these days that, for a short time, she was aroused from her lethargy and determined to bring security and reason into her existence, as far as this might still be possible. Before everything else, she definitely resolved to oppose, once and for all, any further attempts on Franz's part to blackmail her; yes, even if she were forced to seek protection against him from the police. What did it matter, anyway? Everybody knew that she had a bad son, who had served time in prison, and nobody in the world would hold it against her if she were finally to resign him to his fate. Furthermore, she determined to communicate with her former pupils, some of whom were already grown and married, in order to ask them for recommendations. She had made her own living thus far and she was quite able to continue doing so. Even these few days in the country, the fresh air, the rest, the freedom from painful and disagreeable excitements — how favourably it all reacted upon her spirits. She was not so utterly exhausted, after all, as she was made aware by many a man's intercepted glance. Indeed, if she had encouraged that young tourist in the slightest degree — the one who each night, sat in the hotel restaurant, smoking his pipe, after returning from his mountain tours, and who kept his friendly eyes fixed on her — she might even have had her little "adventure" again. But it sufficed her to know that this was still possible. It would have seemed to her unworthy, almost insolent, like a challenge to fate, to have tempted the young man by coquetry to her side, and thus to give him hopes which she did not propose to gratify.

One morning, from her window, she saw him drive away in a motor car. His knapsack was at his feet and, as if he had felt her looking after him, he suddenly turned round and, with a broad gesture, lifted his head with its chamois beard, and she waved back a farewell. He, however, shrugged his shoulders regretfully, as if he wished to say to her: "But now, unfortunately, it is too late!" Then he drove on. For a moment, she felt sad. Was that happiness, perhaps her last happiness, driving away? Nonsense! she answered herself, and was a little ashamed of such sentimental reflections.

The next evening as she had planned, she returned to Vienna.

CI

PRIMARILY BECAUSE SHE feared Franz, she had left no forwarding address. Thus, she found the printed announcement of the death of her mother only now, almost a week after the event had occurred. The names of her brother and her sister-in-law on the announcement were coupled with her own. She was more shocked than grieved. The next morning, at an hour when she knew Karl would not be at home, she went to his house. She was received somewhat coldly by her sister-in-law. Frau Faber held it against her that she could not be reached; a reproach which seemed merited for once as during her last few days the mother had repeatedly asked for Theresa.

It had unfortunately been necessary to complete all the arrangements without her consent. The last will, which Theresa might read at her convenience, was deposited with the notary. It contained hardly anything else except instructions for disposing of the literary estate of the deceased, which was surprisingly rich, but with which the City of Vienna, as the real heir, did not know what to do, and which had not as yet been called for. There had been very little cash; and against that little, a few creditors, small business people of the neighbourhood, had put in claims. In order to pay the more pressing debts, the few possessions of the deceased were to be auctioned off, within a few days. In the somewhat unlikely case of a surplus, Theresa would be notified through the notary.

It could not escape Theresa that her sister-in-law again and again glanced anxiously toward the door. She understood that the woman expected the appearance of her husband with evil forebodings, and she said:

"It might be better if I were to go now."

Her sister-in-law breathed more freely.

"I'll visit you as soon as I can," she said, "but it is really better that you should not meet Karl just now. You know him. He did not even attend the funeral, for fear that he might meet you."

"Then why is my name printed on the announcements?"

"That announcement — just imagine it — was prepared by your mother herself before her death. I'll tell you all about that in detail some time."

And she almost forced Theresa out of the door.

On her way home, Theresa, for the first time in a long while, once more paused at a church. She felt herself compelled to do that much, in memory of her mother, although her mother herself had had little enough to do with religious observances. And again it happened, as it had happened so often during the past year, that in the gloom of this place, filled with the fragrance of incense, a wonderful peace came over her — another and a deeper peace than that which had so often come upon her in the stillness of the forest, on a grassy plot in the mountains, or in any other solitude. And while she sat in the chair, with her hands unconsciously folded as if in prayer, she saw in her mind not only the picture of her mother as she had seen her the last time, but other departed ones who had meant something in her life; they appeared now, not as dead people, but rather as people risen from the grave; who had gained eternal bliss. Wohlschein, too, was among them; and for the first time, he appeared to her not as one suddenly taken away from her, as a decaying corpse, but rather as one who looked down upon her from heaven, smiling and understanding. And far away, impure and almost damned, appeared those who were yet alive. Not only men who had brought her sorrow, like her brother, her son, and the contemptible Kasimir Tobisch — those whom one could well imagine as being damned even while they were alive — but men, too, who had never done her wrong; even such a creature as Thilda seemed

to her more remote than the dead, more ambiguous, more to be pitied, yes, more truly damned.

CII



WITH AUTUMN, THERESA'S school work was resumed. Only a few pupils from last year reappeared, but Theresa succeeded in finding an afternoon position, which she accepted as a particularly fortunate opportunity. It was a position as governess to the two daughters of the owner of a department store in the suburbs, and it was her duty to teach and take the children walking. The father, himself only half educated and in rather mean circumstances, was the more anxious to have a governess for his daughters, since the mother was actively occupied in his store. The two girls were pleasing enough, but somewhat stupid; and occasionally, when Theresa would take them for a walk in the rather poor park nearby and vainly begin a conversation with them, more from habit and a sense of duty than for any other reason, she was oppressed by that same weariness which had so tormented her in her earlier days, but which weighed so terribly, so heavily upon her now that sometimes it resembled a dull despair. The agreeable result of her sojourn in the country disappeared with disturbing rapidity.

Thus when, one night, Franz appeared, not as rude and impudent as he usually was, but rather timid and quiet, she did not have the courage to refuse him lodging, as she had determined to do. During the first few days, he did not, in fact, appreciably disturb her. He spent his time outside the house, received no visitors, and continued so depressed and silent that Theresa was almost brought to the point of asking what it was that troubled him. On the third night, he came in after she had gone to bed. He was in haste. He claimed to have found a furnished room at last, to which he proposed to move immediately, for which purpose he needed the sum of ten gulden. This sum he wanted her to give him at once. Theresa refused, protesting that she did not have anything left. It was almost the truth. But Franz would not believe her, and at once began to search the entire place. As his attitude became increasingly threatening, Theresa thought it wise to open a drawer and, before his eyes, take out a few gulden which she had hidden among some linen. He doubted that this was all that she had hidden away, but she swore that now she had given him her last coin. She breathed more freely when he suddenly gave up the search and took himself off with extraordinary haste.

The next morning, she understood why Franz had been in such a hurry. A detective awakened her from sleep at six o'clock in the morning. He asked for Franz and inquired if she knew his new address, informing her politely that it was her right to withhold any information which she might possess.

"We will get him soon, anyway," he remarked amiably, and left, with an officially regretful glance.

Now Theresa thought that the last vestige of feeling for her son was dead in her heart; that all that still united them was her fear of his return. The baleful glance which he had given her when she had taken her few gulden from the drawer caused her to fear still worse the next time. And she resolved never again to admit him to the house, under any circumstances, even if she had herself to summon the police.

Serious difficulties pressed her ever more closely. Never before had she been forced to ask anybody for help, and she was obliged to confess to herself that any such appeal in the present circumstances was hardly better than begging. And who was there from whom she might expect help? Alfred, of course, would not have refused her. Thilda, too, would help her, in the event of necessity; but the very thought of writing to either one of these two was painful. The lessons which she gave still brought in enough to keep her from actual hunger. No new purchases, for the time being, were absolutely necessary. She was accustomed to a precarious existence, and so she lived on — in seclusion and poverty, but at least peacefully, since Franz had once more disappeared.

And one morning, during the winter, she actually experienced a moment of joy. A letter from Thilda arrived, smelling preciously of the familiar perfume which she had been accustomed to use ever since she was a young girl.

"My dear Fraulein Theresa Fabiani," she wrote, "I frequently think of you — almost as often as I think of poor Papa. Will you not be good enough, my dear Fraulein Fabiani, to place a few flowers on his grave for me, the next time you go to the church-yard? And I would particularly appreciate it if you were to write and tell me how everything is going with you. Does the "class" still exist?

How is little Crete? Has she learned to spell yet? It is very foggy here, these winter days; that is because the sea is so near. There is hardly any snow. My husband wants to be remembered to you. He is frequently away, and then the evenings are lonely and long — but you know that, after all, I am not so unwilling to be alone with myself, and for this reason it doesn't occur to me to complain. I send my most affectionate regards, dear Fraulein Theresa, and I hope to meet you again some time. Your grateful Thilda.

"P.S. — A sum for the flowers is enclosed."

Theresa stared at the letter for a long while. "I hope to meet you again some time" — that did not sound very promising, after all. Perhaps the letter was written solely because of the flowers for her father's grave. As a matter of fact, the "sum" was not enclosed. Thilda had either forgotten to enclose it, or somebody had stolen it from the letter. Well, after all, a few asters would be sufficient, and these she could buy herself, if necessary. "The next time you go to the church-yard" — Theresa had not been there again since Whitsuntide. She would surely go during the Christmas holidays. To miss a lesson and buy flowers besides, was quite beyond her means. The letter she would answer later. Frau Thilda Verkade had kept *her* waiting long enough.

CIII

A FEW EVENINGS afterward, quite late, the bell rang. Theresa's heart stopped beating. She crept to the door and looked through the keyhole. It was not her son. A still youthful woman stood outside, whom Theresa did not immediately recognize.

"Who is there?" she asked, hesitatingly.

A high, somewhat hoarse voice answered:

"A good old friend. Please open the door, Fraulein Theresa! It's Agnes — Agnes Leutner!"

Agnes? What did she want? What tidings did she bring? Probably some news of Franz! She opened the door.

Agnes entered quite timidly and paused in the hall to shake the snow from her garments.

"Good evening, Fraulein Theresa!"

"Won't you come in?"

Agnes followed Theresa into the living room, and her uncertain glance fastened upon the table littered with books and papers. Theresa looked at her. Oh, one could not doubt for a moment what manner of woman she was! Her face made up, heavily rouged, under the violet felt hat with a cheap ostrich feather; the curls, dyed blond, falling over her eyes; big imitation jewels in her ears; worn-out imitation astrakhan jacket, with a muff to match — thus she stood, impudent and embarrassed at the same time.

"Have a seat, Fraulein Agnes!"

Agnes had noticed Theresa's searching, damning look well enough, and, in a somewhat mocking tone, she said, apologetically:

"Naturally, I would not have disturbed you — but I have a message."

"From Franz?"

"With your permission!"

And she sat down.

"You see, he is at the hospital of the Jesuit Fathers..."

"For heaven's sake!" Theresa cried; and she knew suddenly that it was her son who was lying at the hospital — sick perhaps, sick to death.

Agnes reassured her.

"There, there, it's not dangerous, Fraulein Theresa. He will get well again, long before the trial. He is under arrest, you know! But they won't be able to get the goods on him, this time, because he had nothing to do with it. The police always get the wrong ones, anyway!"

"What is the matter with him?"

"Nothing at all — he is just a little sick!" She hummed a popular ditty— "Love, love, that's all it is..." And, with a mocking laugh: "Well, it will last a little while. And afterwards, you've got to be careful. For the sake of the others. As if the others were careful! I had it real bad. I had to spend six weeks in the hospital!"

Theresa grew alternately red and pale. Beside this woman, she felt like a little girl. She had only one desire — to get rid of her as quickly as possible. And, moving away from her as far as she could, she said:

"What is the message that you have for me from Franz?" Agnes, obviously piqued, aped her intonation:

"The message that I have for you from Franz? That ought not to be so difficult to guess! Or do you think, perhaps, that they give the patients enough to eat at the hospital? Unless you have tuberculosis, or something

like that, they certainly don't! He needs money, to buy a little something to help out his meals. A mother's got to see to that!"

"Why didn't he write, if he is sick? I would have tried to raise it, somewhere!"

"He probably knows why he didn't write!"

"I always helped him, when I could..."

She stopped abruptly. Was it not shameful, after all, to account to such a person for what she had done?

"That's all right. I can imagine that you haven't got anything to blame yourself for. It's always the same story — sometimes one has more, and sometimes less. But you still look good enough. You'll find somebody yet who'll spend something."

Once more the blood rose to Theresa's face. This person! — did she not talk as if Theresa were of her kind? Oh, how Franz must have talked to her and to others about her — the son talking thus of his mother! In what a light he saw her! She tried to find an answer, but could not. At last, helplessly and hesitatingly, she said:

"I am giving lessons!"

"Oh, of course!" Agnes replied. And, with a disparaging look at the books and papers, she added: "I can see that! It's lucky that you had an education. I'd prefer to pick my own man, too!"

Theresa rose.

"Go!" she said. "I will bring Franz what he needs." Agnes, too, got up, slowly, as if offended. But now she seemed to realize that she had employed the wrong tone, and she did not want to return to Franz with empty hands. So she said:

"Very well. If you want to visit him in the hospital, do so. But that is probably something that he doesn't expect. And you didn't think of it, either!"

"I did not know that he was in the hospital!"

"Nor did I. I found him accidentally. I was calling on an old friend of mine, to take him some food. Yes, the likes of me have got to save a little, too, and we've got to earn it hard enough, Fraulein Theresa — harder than by lessons! Well, you can imagine my surprise when I saw Franz lying there, across from my friend. He was glad to see me, too. Old love doesn't rust! Well, and after one word had followed the other, I asked him if he didn't need anything from outside, and then he said: 'Perhaps you would go to my mother, and see if she can't send me a little money for food.' 'Why not,' I said, 'your mother will probably remember me. And she may prefer to send something by me, rather than come here herself. That's disagreeable for people who aren't accustomed to it!"

Theresa had a few gulden in her purse.

"Here, take this. I am sorry, but I have no more."

She noticed that Agnes glanced at the chest of drawers. So Franz had told her about that, too! And, with trembling lips, she added:

"In there, I have nothing, either! Perhaps for Christmas... But then, I shall come myself."

"By Christmas, he may be free again. I'm telling you, Fraulein Theresa, this time they haven't got anything on him! Well, anyhow, I thank you many times, in his name. And we understand each other, don't we? Haven't you got a few cigarettes for me?"

Theresa's first impulse was to answer that she had none, but then she remembered that a half empty box Wohlschein had once left was still somewhere around. She disappeared into the next room, and returned with a handful of cigarettes.

"That will please Franz particularly," Agnes said, and thrust them into her muff. "And I'll smoke one now

if I may?"

Theresa did not reply, but offered her hand. She no longer had any ill feeling nor did she feel any superiority over the girl. There was really not such a tremendous difference between her and Agnes. After all, hadn't she sold herself to Wohlschein?

Give him my regards, Agnes, she said, gently.

It was dark on the stairs. Theresa guided Agnes through the hall. And before the janitor came to open the door, Agnes raised the collar of her astrakhan jacket. Theresa knew that she did so to save her from embarrassment.

That night, she sat awake for a long time. Now she had gone through that, too. Why, after all, did it seem extraordinary? She had a son who was a good-for-nothing, who kept company with strumpets and thieves, and was occasionally wanted by the police, arrested at intervals, and who was now at the hospital with a foul ailment. She might have accepted that, by now. And yet, he was her son! Time and again — she might fight against it as best she could — in her own heart she felt pity, she felt guilt, when he suffered and did evil. Guilt; that was it! Strange, that in moments like this she always thought of her own guilt only, as if she who had borne him were alone responsible for what he did; as if the man who had begotten him and then disappeared into the darkness of his existence had had nothing at all to do with it! Well, yes! For Kasimir Tobisch, the embrace which had begotten her son had been one of many — not happier and not of greater importance than any of the others which he had enjoyed. He did not know that the man for whose existence in this world he was responsible, was a scoundrel; he did not even know that he had a son. And if, by chance, he had learned it — what would he have understood of it all? What had this lost soul at the criminal hospital to do with the aging man who, after twenty dark, stupid years of swindling, was playing the 'cello at a cheap music-hall and drinking the piano player's beer? How was he to feel any relationship, when even she herself could imagine only with great difficulty that from a fleeting moment of lust a man had sprung who was her son? That union of a moment long since forgotten, and this one of today — how was it possible to employ the same word for them? And yet, that which for years had been absolutely unimportant, suddenly took on an incredible importance and meaning for her, as if the moment that Kasimir, too, should know of the existence of their child, her own life would take on a new substance, a new sense, a new form. She felt like one standing beside the bed of a sleeper, uncertain whether merely to stroke his forehead quietly and take leave without disturbing his slumber, or whether to shake him awake to life and responsibility. Then she reflected that Kasimir Tobisch was only a dreamer, who knew nothing of the essence of his own existence. Doubtless there had been other women in his life. Perhaps he had still other children; perhaps he knew of one or two of them, for he might not always have succeeded in sneaking away. But for the one whom he had forgotten completely, suddenly to stand before him, twenty years after he had left her, and say: "Kasimir, you and I have a child!" — that was certainly something which had never happened to him before. And, as in a picture, she saw it all played out before her mind's eye: how she aroused him from his slumber; how she took his hand and led him through innumerable streets symbolic of the many crossways of his life; how she, with him, knocked at a door, the door of the criminal hospital, and how she led him forward to the bed of a sick boy who was his son; how he opened his eyes wide in surprise, beginning to understand, and finally, how he sank on his knees at the bedside and turning round to her, whispered: "Forgive me, Theresa!"

The first Christmas holiday, she went to the cemetery. It was deceptive spring weather. A lukewarm wind was blowing over the graves, and the ground was wet with melted snow. She had brought asters, white ones for Thilda, and violet ones for herself. She did not find Wohlschein's grave as easily as she had expected. The tombstone was not yet erected. Only a number told her where Thilda's father lay buried. Thilda's father, she

thought; then she realized that it was her lover who lay here in his eternal slumber. Now we would have been married almost three-quarters of a year, she thought. Today I would be sitting in a warm, nicely furnished room, and, like Thilda, I would be looking through a clean window at the street outside, and would have no difficulties at all. But she hardly felt regret that it had not happened that way; and she thought of the deceased without tenderness. Am I so ungrateful, she asked herself — so cold, so extinguished? But the fancied images of other men arose before her — men to whom she had belonged. And today she knew that it was only memories of these others that had lent a passing joy to the hours which she had spent with Wohlschein.

And suddenly — but she remembered at once that even during his lifetime she had felt similar reactions — she asked herself whether her lover had not surmised this repeated and deep infidelity, and had disintegrated in a moment when the pitiful rôle he played had become painfully apparent in his mind — that he had then, as they termed it, died of heart-failure! Oh, such connections existed; of that she felt certain! Theresa's was a mysterious, deeply hidden guilt, which burned only occasionally, far down in her soul, and was extinguished again almost immediately. She felt as if her responsibility for Wohlschein's end were not the only one smouldering like an uncertain, pale flame in the abyss of her soul. The knowledge of a great, dark guilt was slumbering within her; and after a long, long time, she thought once more of a far-distant night when she had given birth to her son and when she had murdered him. But this dead man, who had been her son, was still playing the ghost in this world. Even now he was lying in a bed at the criminal's hospital, waiting for his mother, the murderess, to come and confess her guilt.

The violet and white asters fell from her hands and, with eyes staring like those of a mad woman, she gazed into space.

And yet it was the same person who sat, that night, with the family of the department store owner before a well-laid table, and who talked of everyday trifles with the husband and wife and with another middle-class couple who had been invited: she chatted about the snowy weather, prices, teaching in grammar, and the high schools, and she no longer took thought of her dead.

CIV

DURING THE NEXT few days, Theresa considered the question of writing to Kasimir Tobisch. Perhaps that was not even his name. In any case, it was by no means certain whether he was now using that or some other name. Moreover, it was possible that he would pay no attention to the letter at all, especially if he fully realized who sent it. So it seemed wisest to wait for him, some evening, after the performance. She might act as if she had met him accidentally.

One night, at eleven o'clock she stood beneath the lighted sign of the Universum. At the entrance stood a gigantic porter in a shabby green livery with gold buttons, a long stick with a silver balloon in his hand. The performance was not yet over. Theresa looked for the door through which Kasimir Tobisch would have to leave the hall. It was easily discovered: round the corner, another street; around the next corner, in another dimly lighted lane, over a glass door, she found the inscription: "Stage Entrance." At that moment a woman was leaving it — an emaciated, common looking creature in a poor, much too thin raincoat. She disappeared round the corner. To tell the truth, her own coat was not quite correct for snowy weather, either. She wore the elegant spring coat which Thilda had given her, and underneath it, a heavy woolen sweater. Oh well, after all, she was better dressed than many another woman in her circumstances. Her feet grew wet and cold. She should have taken her heavy shoes which she had last worn in the country when she was with Wohlschein. In spite of her continuous pacing up and down, she felt frozen. Perhaps it would have been more sensible to have bought a cheap seat and waited inside for the end of the performance. And she kept pacing up and down round the building, in the snow-covered streets, keeping her eye on both the main door and the stage entrance. For a moment, her waiting seemed ridiculous and senseless to her. What did she want? Whom did she expect? An old musician playing the 'cello within, or a young man in a soft black hat, whose moustache smelled of perfume? He had nothing to do with her; and yet it was as if just such a young man would come through the glass door in the next moment: a man in a wide coat, with a soft black hat in his hand. And she, upon her part, fancied herself as the pretty miss who is free on a Sunday, and anticipates a tryst with her lover. Of course, it had then been spring, too. But what was she doing here? It was not spring, nor was she the pretty miss any more. Was she not really that very Fraulein Steinbauer, whom she had pitied so much at the time, because she had no lover? She was not that girl and he was not that man; then what did they want of each other? No, truly in all her life she had not done anything quite as stupid as this. Would it be better to give it up entirely, and return some other time, when she would be in a better frame of mind?

She was already on the point of leaving the building, when she regretted her decision and again turning round, noticed that the performance had just come to an end. The porter had taken up his position, with his stick held stiff and the balloon swaying in the wind. People poured out of the door; carriages drove up. Quickly, Theresa crossed the street, ran toward the stage entrance, and took a position on the opposite side, where she could keep her eye on it.

Kasimir was the first to leave. Tall, swathed in his coat, with his soft, black hat in his hand and a cigarette between his lips, he hardly looked different from the man whom she had known twenty years ago. It was like a miracle. He looked round on all sides, then gazed up at the sky, and shook his head, as if surprised and disgusted at seeing the snow. He put his hat on; then, suddenly, as if realizing that somebody was waiting for him on the other side of the street, he crossed, with long strides, directly toward Theresa, passed her with a superficial glance, and had gone.

“Kasimir!” she cried.

He did not even turn, and walked quickly away.

“Kasimir Tobisch!” she shouted.

He stopped, turned round, came toward Theresa, and looked into her face. She smiled, although now he looked quite different and older than he really was, with many wrinkles on his forehead and still deeper ones between his nose and the corners of his mouth. Now he recognized her.

“What do my eyes see?” he cried. “This is — this is — Her Highness the Princess!”

Her smile remained. It was this that first occurred to him after twenty years — that when he had first met her, he had acted as if he had taken her for an archduchess or a princess! Well, at least, she had changed less than she had feared. She nodded in confirmation. Then her smile became empty, and she said:

“Yes, I am Theresa!”

“This is indeed a surprise!” he said, and shook her hand. She would have recognized him by the hard touch of his long fingers. “And where do you come from?”

“I happened to attend the performance, and recognized you.”

She paused.

“And recognized me?”

“Naturally! You have hardly changed.”

“Nor you!”

He lifted her chin and, with glassy eyes, stared into her face. His breath reeked of sour beer. “So this is really Theresa! That we two should meet again! How have you been, Theresa?”

She was still conscious of the smile on her lips. She could not efface it, although it signified nothing whatsoever.

“That is not so easily told.”

“Surely, surely!” he assured her. “It’s half an eternity, after all, since we met the last time.”

She nodded.

“Almost twenty years!”

“Yes, much can happen in twenty years! You are probably married. Children?”

“One.”

“Really? I have four!”

“Four?”

“Yes, two boys and two girls. But shouldn’t we walk on? It’s too cold to stand here!”

She nodded. Suddenly, she realized again that her feet were cold.

“Where is your companion?” he asked, stopping abruptly.

She looked at him without understanding.

“You haven’t been alone in such a place as this? You were probably with your husband?”

“No, my husband unfortunately is dead. A long time ago. I was with friends, but they had to leave before the end.”

“Not very polite friends, if I may say so. May I take you to the street car?”

They went down the street, Theresa Fabiani and Kasimir Tobisch, as they had gone down many a street twenty years before. They had little to say to one another.

“This is really a surprise,” Kasimir began again. “So you are married, or rather, widowed?”

She noticed that he estimated her spring coat through the corner of his eye. His glance became dull when he looked down and noticed her shoes.

“I didn’t know that you played the ‘cello, too,” she said, quickly.

“You don’t mean it!”

“You were a painter, then.”

“A painter and a musician. I am still a painter, though now that is more a trade than an art, to tell you the truth. One always needs extra money!”

“I can imagine! With four children, it can’t be too easy.”

“Two are already grown. My oldest is assistant to a dentist.”

“How old is he?”

“Twenty-two.”

“How old?”

They now stood at the street car stop.

“Twenty-two? Then you were married when we met?” She laughed.

“My, my!” he replied, and joined in her laughter. “I think I have said too much.”

“Never mind,” she answered. And his information really, had hardly moved her. She simply thought: So he had a wife and children even then! That’s why he used a false name and fled. For now she realized that Kasimir Tobisch had never been his name. What was the name of this man? Who was this man at her side, by whom she had had a son now lying at the criminal hospital, and whom she had intended to introduce to him. Now she might have asked him his real name, and perhaps he would have told her the truth. But it was utterly unimportant what his name was, whether he was painter or musician, whether he had four children or ten. He was a poor, silly devil, and he did not even realize it. In a certain sense, even she was better off than he — or was she worse off?

“There is the street car now,” he said, obviously breathing more freely.

“Yes, here it is,” she repeated, amused. But now she began to regret that this interlude was at an end, and that Kasimir Tobisch, or whatever his name might be, would again disappear among the other nameless ones — forever. The street car stopped, but she did not board it, although his look politely invited her to do so. And she said:

“I would have liked to talk with you a little longer. Wouldn’t you care to call on me, some time?”

He looked at her. Oh, he no longer bothered to act for her benefit. In his look, she read quite clearly: To what end? As a woman, you don’t count for me; and as for your spring coat, that does not attract me, either! Still, he seemed caught by the fear in her eyes, and courteously replied:

“Gladly, if I may take that liberty.”

She gave him her address.

“You probably remember my name, don’t you?” she added, a little sadly. She smiled, and whispered:

“My name is Theresa!”

“Surely,” he said, “I remember. But the family name?”

“That you forget?”

“Not at all, but now your name is probably different.”

“No, my name is still Theresa Fabiani!”

“Then you aren’t married?”

She shook her head.

“But didn’t you say that you had a child?”

“Yes, I have a child!”

“Well, well...”

Another street car came, Theresa looked Kasimir Tobisch straight into the eyes. Now he might have asked more; now he could have asked, now he should have asked! And something like a question did appear in his eyes; something even like understanding. Surely it was understanding, and for that reason he did not ask.

The street car stopped. Theresa boarded it. From the platform, she said, quickly:

"You might telephone me."

"You have a telephone? You must be well off! I must go next door, to the store, when I want to telephone! There, then, au revoir!"

The street car rolled on. For a while, Kasimir Tobisch stood where he was and waved after Theresa. Suddenly, her smile disappeared. Without responding to his gestures, gravely and coldly, she kept her eyes on him, and saw him turn and walk away. Softly, in dense flakes, the snow fell. The streets were almost deserted. And the man who had for so long a time been Kasimir Tobisch, the father of her child, disappeared, nameless now, among the other nameless ones — disappeared for ever.

CV



THE SMALL SUM which Theresa had mailed to Franz after Agnes Leutner had called on her, was returned to her. The addressee had been dismissed from the hospital, and the post office was unable to trace him. So they had set him free again? It was not a comforting thought for Theresa. And — not for the first time — she wondered if it would not be wise for her to change her lodgings. But what would that avail? He would know how to find her out! Unluckily, it was an even more pressing question whether she would be able to keep her present flat. The rent had gradually become too high for her. It was due again in February and she did not know how she would scratch it together again. Her classes had gone to pieces, perhaps because the parents were no longer satisfied with the results which she obtained. Well, what she was able to do — that she had always realized — had never been too much. Only her conscientiousness, her friendly way of dealing with children, had enabled her to compete against better teachers than she. How sadly she had retrogressed during the last few months, she knew only too well.

Shortly before her rent was due, the notary informed her that a small sum was waiting for her from the sale of her mother's furniture. Until autumn then, she could feel secure. That improved her mood, so that she could return to her efforts with renewed perseverance. In March, she found two new, if poorly paying, pupils in the suburbs.

Then, once again, news came from Franz. An old woman brought the letter. He was about to take a position, and his mother should help him now for the last time. He named a definite sum — 150 gulden. This demand shocked her. Apparently he knew that she had inherited something. Without a word, she sent him the fifth part of what he had requested, and the next day she took what was left — about 500 gulden — to the savings bank. She breathed more freely, once that was done.

Spring had come again. And with the first caressingly warm days, the familiar weariness and a melancholy of a deeper kind than she had ever known before, overcame her. Everything that, thus far, had made life easier for her, now merely made her the more sad: short walks, and even a theatre performance which she once attended. More depressing than anything else, though, was a letter from Thilda — a belated answer to one of her own, informing her that she had adorned her father's grave with flowers. It contained the news that Thilda was pregnant. Theresa felt only one thing: how empty and hopeless her own life was. And it happened, during these days, after long months of quietude, that — uncertainly, without actual desire, and yet strangely tormenting — her senses reawakened. She had carnal dreams, ugly and beautiful, but always of unknown persons, men without distinguishable faces, in whose arms she dreamed she lay. Only once it happened that she dreamed of walking with Richard along the Danube, where she had been his. This particular dream lacked all animal elements, but she felt enveloped by the tenderness which she had always longed for from him, and which she had never known. A tormentingly unfulfillable tenderness and the apprehension of endless solitude remained.

CVI



LATE ONE EVENING in May, her door bell rang again. She was startled. For the payment of a bill which was due the next day she happened to have a somewhat large sum of money in the house, which she had just fetched from the bank. And for that very reason, she did not doubt that it was Franz who was standing outside the door. She vowed to herself that he should not get a kreutzer. Besides, she had hidden it so carefully that she was sure he would not be able to find it. The window was open, and if the worst came to the worst, she would shout for help. She tiptoed to the door, but did not even dare to look through the keyhole. He knocked so violently that she feared the neighbours might hear him, and so she opened it.

At first view, Franz appeared to be better dressed than usual, but he looked more sick and pale than she had ever seen him before.

"Good evening, Mother," he said, and attempted to enter. But Theresa restrained him.

"Well, what is the matter?" he asked, looking at her viciously.

"What do you want?" she asked, harshly.

He closed the door behind him. "No money," he replied, laughing derisively, "but if you would let me stay over night..."

She shook her head.

"For one night, Mother! Tomorrow, you'll be rid of me for ever."

"I have heard that before!"

"Oh! Perhaps some one is here already! Perhaps somebody is lying on the couch!"

He shoved her aside, opened the door to the living room, and looked round on all sides.

"You won't sleep in my house again," Theresa said. "Just this one night, Mother."

"You have some sort of lodging. What do you want from me?"

"They have sent me away for the night. Things like that happen, and I haven't got money enough for a hotel."

"Whatever you want for a hotel, I can give you."

His eyes glistened.

"Well, then, give it to me!"

She took her purse and gave him a few gulden.

"Is that all?"

"With that, you can stay at a hotel for three nights!"

"All right, then, I'll go."

But he did not go. She looked at him questioningly. He proceeded, with a mocking laugh:

"Yes, I'll go, if you will give me my share of the inheritance!"

What inheritance? Are you crazy:

"Oh, no! I want my share of my grandmother's money!"

"What are you entitled to?"

He came quite close to her.

"Well, then, listen to me, Mother. You heard me say this before. You are seeing me for the last time tonight. I have a position — not here in town, but somewhere outside. And I'll never come back. How am I to get my inheritance, if you won't give it to me now?"

“What are you talking about? What kind of inheritance do you claim, since I have inherited nothing myself?”

“Do you really think I’m so stupid? Don’t you think I know that you have received money from Wohlschein and from your mother? And am I to beg for the few gulden I need so badly? Is that the way a mother treats her son?”

“I have nothing!”

“Well, we’ll see whether or not you have anything!”

He went to the chest of drawers.

“How dare you!” she cried, and seized him by the arm with which he was fumbling in the drawers.

“Give me the key!”

She let him go and, running to the window, bent out as if to cry for help. He rushed over to her, pushed her back, and closed the window. She hurried to the door. In an instant he was at her side. He turned the key and put it into his pocket. Then he grasped both of her hands.

“Give it to me voluntarily, Mother!”

“I have nothing!” she whispered through set teeth.

“I know that you have something. I know that you have it! Give me something, Mother!”

She was mad. She was not afraid now. She hated him. “If I had a thousand gulden, there would not be a kreutzer for one like you!”

For a moment he let go of her, seemingly sobered. “Mother, I’ll tell you something. Give me half of what you have. I need it for my trip. I have no position! I’ve got to disappear! If they get me this time, they’ll give me a year or two.”

“So much the better!” she cried.

“So? You think so? All right!”

And again he rushed to the chest of drawers, striking at it with his clenched fist. The drawer still held. He hesitated for a moment. Then he took a jimmy from his pocket, and broke it open. Again Theresa tried to interfere, to hold his hands. He pushed her aside and plunged his arms into the linen, throwing piece after piece on the floor.

Meanwhile, Theresa had opened one of the inner windows, and was about to open the outer one when he tore her back.

“Robbers!” she shouted. “Thieves!”

Franz, with inflamed eyes, stood before her.

“Will you give it to me or not?”

“Robbers!” She shouted again.

Now he grasped her, pressed one of his hands over her (mouth, and dragged her, pushed her into her small bedroom, at the foot of her bed.

“Have you got it in here? In the mattress? In the pillows?”

Again he had to let her go in order to ransack the bed. And again she shouted:

“Robbers! Thieves!”

With one hand he now grasped her wrists, closing her mouth with the other. She kicked at him. He let go her hands, and grasped her by the throat.

“Robbers! Thieves!”

She shouted again and again. Then Franz began to choke her. She sank down to the floor by the side of her bed. He loosened his grip on her throat, and taking a handkerchief, folded it and thrust it into her mouth, then

he took a towel hanging near the wash stand and bound her hands.

She panted for breath. Her big, staring eyes shone up at him through the darkness. A ray of light came in from the next room. Like a madman, he searched the bed, tore the cases off the pillows and looked in the wash-basin, in the pitcher, under the chest of drawers, under the carpet.

Suddenly he stopped. The outside bell was ringing. Through the closed doors, he heard voices. No doubt they had heard his mother shout, and perhaps they had also heard the noise which he had made with his fists and with his jimmy. Quickly he unwound the towel from her hands and tore the gag from her mouth. She lay prone on the floor, gasping.

"Nothing has happened, Mother," he cried.

Her eyes were open. She looked; she stared. No, she was not dead. But little could have happened.

Again the bell rang three times, five times, ever more persistently. What was he to do now? Through the window? Three flights! He looked again at his mother. No, there was nothing the matter with her. She looked at him with open eyes, moving her arms. Her lips were trembling. The bell rang incessantly. There was nothing to be done but open the door. Then he might still rush through the people, run down the stairs and reach the street. If only she were not lying there, like one dead! He bent down and tried to lift her. But it seemed that she still fought against him! She even shook her head. No, she was not dead! She had merely swooned. Or had she only pretended to faint, so as to defeat his purposes?

The bell kept on ringing. There were knocks at first, then bangs against the door.

"Open! Open!" they shouted outside.

Franz opened the inner door and rushed into the anteroom. The main door shook under the banging fists. No recourse was left to him; he had to open. Was it possible? Only two women were standing outside, staring at him, horror-stricken. He pushed them aside and dashed down the stairs. He heard them shout behind him: "Stop him!"

A man's voice joined in. It came from above. And before he had reached the house door, somebody had seized him from behind by the shoulders. He could not free himself. He shouted and cursed. Then he became silent. It was over. But his mother was not dead. She had merely swooned. What did they want of him? Nothing had happened to his mother. People thronged around him. A policeman, too, was there.

Meanwhile, the two young women had rushed into the flat and found Fraulein Theresa Fabiani stretched out beside her bed. Directly behind them came others — another woman and another man. They lay Theresa on the disordered bed. She looked around unable to speak. She hardly recognized the people who were gradually filling the room — the neighbours, the police captain, the police doctor. She probably did not understand the questions which they asked her. So they did not insist on confronting her with her son. The physician established the fact that no fatal wound had been inflicted. The flat was sealed by the police, and Theresa was taken to the hospital that same night.

There they found that a cartilage in her neck had been broken — a circumstance which made the outlook for both her and Franz very much worse. Depositions by the neighbours established the fact that the teacher Theresa Fabiani was a sister of Representative Faber. He, too, was informed, in the course of the night, that a crime had been committed against his sister. Early the next morning, he appeared together with his wife at the bedside of his sick sister, who had been placed in a special room. She had a high temperature, which the doctors attributed to the shock rather than to her injuries. Apparently, she had not completely regained consciousness. She did not recognize her visitors who departed shortly after they had come.

CVII

TOWARD NOON, ALFRED presented himself at her bedside. He had read of the crime in the papers. Although her temperature was already lower, Theresa was delirious. Restlessly, she tossed her body to and fro. Her eyes alternately opened and closed. She whispered incoherent words. Nor did she at first appear to recognize her latest visitor.

After the physician in charge had informed Professor Doctor Nuellheim of the details of the case he left him alone with the patient. Alfred sat down beside her and felt her pulse which was weak and irregular.

And now, as if the touch of this once beloved hand had an efficacy that other and more casual touches did not possess, the patient's restlessness seemed to subside. When, without any particular purpose, he kept his eyes fastened upon her forehead and her eyes, something still more extraordinary occurred. Those eyes which until now, even while open, had failed to recognize any one, shone as if with mounting consciousness. The withered features grew softer, younger.

When Alfred bent closer to her, she whispered:

"Thank you!" He protested, took her hands, and uttered the words of consolation that came to his lips. She shook her head, more and more vigorously, not only as if she did not wish to be consoled, but as if she wished to confide something to him. He bent down to hear her.

"Promise me that you will say in court—" she began.

He thought that her delirium was about to begin afresh, and rested a hand on her forehead. She continued, however, to talk, or rather to whisper, not able to speak aloud:

"They will believe you — a doctor. He is innocent. He has only repaid what I did to him. They must not punish him too severely!"

Again Alfred tried to quiet her. But she continued, hurriedly, as if realizing how limited was her time.

What she had begun to do but never finished was described; that which her desire had craved but her will refused, and which she always remembered but had never dared definitely to recall — that hour, perhaps it had been a swift second, when she had murdered her child in her heart. All this she lived again, vividly, as if she were just living through it at that moment. From her lips Alfred was able to read a few words, though without completely understanding their purport. But he interpreted them as an attempt to absolve her son of all guilt. Whether this secret palliation would stand before a heavenly or an earthly tribunal, it did exist for this dying woman — and dying she would be, whether she lived ten years longer or died that very instant. Alfred realized that the confession of her guilt did not oppress her in this hour, but rather liberated her, since it made her end less meaningless.

He did not even attempt to offer her words of encouragement or of solace. They would not have reached her consciousness in this hour. He sensed that she had at last found her son, so long lost to her, at the moment when he had become the instrument of an eternal justice.

Her plea finished, she fell back exhausted. Alfred felt her consciousness gradually receding farther and farther into the darkness until she no longer recognized him.

During the next few hours her condition grew worse. This was as the physicians had expected. Suddenly, unexpectedly she died, before an operation could be performed.

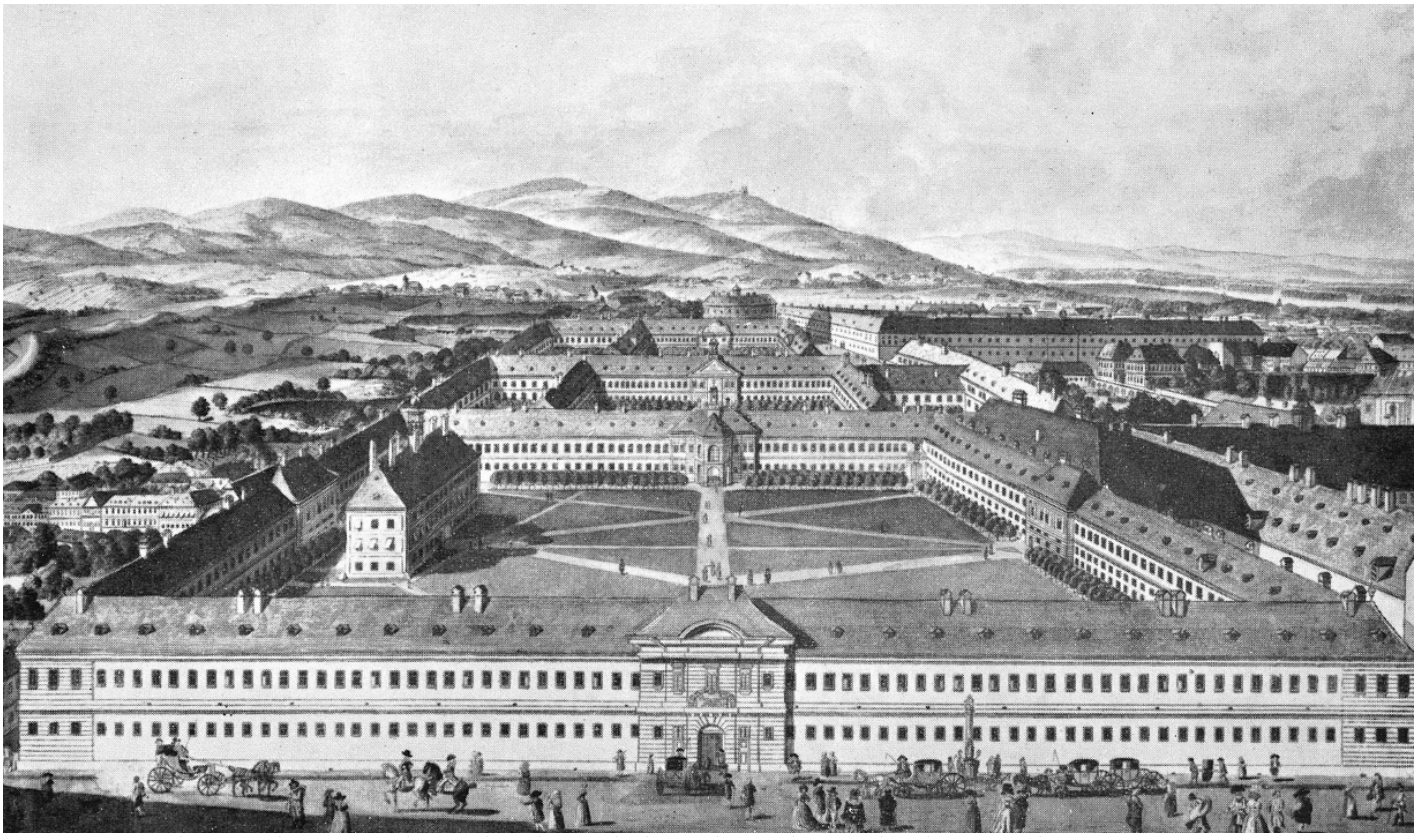
Alfred talked to the attorney who had been appointed to defend Franz. The obliging counsellor tried to introduce Theresa's confession at the trial as a mitigating circumstance. It found little favour with the court.

Half mockingly, the district attorney pointed out that the defendant had probably not retained any memory of this first hour of his life, and spoke disparagingly of certain metaphysical tendencies in these days to veil, with the best of intentions, obvious proofs of guilt and thus circumvent justice. The motion to consult an expert was overruled, if for no other reason than that it was impossible to decide whether to call a physician, a priest, or a philosopher for this responsible task.

The court only permitted the defendant's illegitimate birth and his consequent lack of a proper education to be advanced in his behalf. So Franz was sentenced to twelve years of solitary confinement in prison, with bread and water to be served him on the anniversary of the day the crime had been committed.

Theresa Fabiani, of course, was buried long before the trial began. Beside a cheap, withered evergreen wreath, bearing the inscription, "To my unfortunate sister," there lay a cluster of spring flowers. The beautiful flowers had arrived from Holland — too late.

The Short Stories



Vienna General Hospital, 1784 — where Schnitzler worked as a doctor, before abandoning medicine to pursue a career in writing

The Dead are Silent (1897)

Original German Title: 'Die Toten schweigen'

Translated by Courtland H. Young, 1907

HE COULD ENDURE the quiet waiting in the carriage no longer; it was easier to get out and walk up and down. It was now dark; the few scattered lamps in the narrow side street quivered uneasily in the wind. The rain had stopped, the sidewalks were almost dry, but the rough-paved roadway was still moist, and little pools gleamed here and there.

"Strange, isn't it?" thought Franz. "Here we are scarcely a hundred paces from the Prater, and yet it might be a street in some little country town. Well, it's safe enough, at any rate. She won't meet any of the friends she dreads so much here."

He looked at his watch. "Only just seven, and so dark already! It is an early autumn this year... and then this confounded storm I..." He turned his coat-collar up about his neck and quickened his pacing. The glass in the street lamps rattled lightly.

"Half an hour more," he said to himself, "then I can go home. I could almost wish — that that half-hour were over." He stood for a moment on the corner, where he could command a view of both streets. "She'll surely come to-day," his thoughts ran on, while he struggled with his hat, which threatened to blow away. "It's Friday.... Faculty meeting at the University; she needn't hurry home." He heard the clanging of street-car gongs, and the hour chimed from a nearby church tower. The street became more animated. Hurrying figures passed him, clerks of neighboring shops; they hastened onward, fighting against the storm. No one noticed him; a couple of half-grown girls glanced up in idle curiosity as they went by. Suddenly he saw a familiar figure coming toward him. He hastened to meet her.... Could it be she? On foot?

She saw him, and quickened her pace.

"You are walking?" he asked.

"I dismissed the cab in front of the theatre. I think I've had that driver before."

A man passed them, turning to look at the lady. Her companion glared at him, and the other passed on hurriedly. The lady looked after him. "Who was it?" she asked, anxiously.

"Don't know him. We'll see no one we know here, don't worry. But come now, let's get into the cab."

"Is that your carriage?"

"Yes."

"An open one?"

"It was warm and pleasant when I engaged it an hour ago."

They walked to the carriage; the lady stepped in.

"Driver!" called the man.

"Why, where is he?" asked the lady.

Franz looked around. "Well, did you ever? I don't see him anywhere."

"Oh—" her tone was low and timid.

"Wait a moment, child, he must be around here somewhere."

The young man opened the door of a little saloon, and discovered his driver at a table with several others.

The man rose hastily. “In a minute, sir,” he explained, swallowing his glass of wine.

“What do you mean by this?”

“All right, sir... Be there in a minute.” His step was a little unsteady as he hastened to his horses. “Where’ll you go, sir?”

“Prater — Summer-house.”

Franz entered the carriage. His companion sat back in a corner, crouching fearsomely under the shadow of the cover.

He took both her hands in his. She sat silent. “Won’t you say good evening to me?”

“Give me a moment to rest, dear. I’m still out of breath.”

He leaned back in his corner. Neither spoke for some minutes. The carriage turned into the Prater Street, passed the Tegethoff Monument, and a few minutes later was rolling swiftly through the broad, dark Prater Avenue.

Emma turned suddenly and flung both arms around her lover’s neck. He lifted the veil that still hung about her face, and kissed her.

“I have you again — at last!” she exclaimed.

“Do you know how long it is since we have seen each other?” he asked.

“Since Sunday.”

“Yes, and that wasn’t good for much.”

“Why not? You were in our house.”

“Yes — in your house. That’s just it. This can’t go on. I shall not enter your house again.... What’s the matter?”

“A carriage passed us.”

“Dear girl, the people who are driving in the Prater at such an hour, and in such weather, aren’t noticing much what other people are doing.”

“Yes — that’s so. But some one might look in here, by chance.”

“We couldn’t be recognized. It’s too dark.”

“Yes — but can’t we drive somewhere else?”

“Just as you like.” He called to the driver, who did not seem to hear. Franz leaned forward and touched the man.

“Turn around again. What are you whipping your horses like that for? We’re in no hurry, I tell you. Drive — let me see — yes — drive down the avenue that leads to the Reichs Bridge.”

“The Reichsstrasse?”

“Yes. But don’t hurry so, there’s no need of it.”

“All right, sir. But it’s the wind that makes the horses so crazy.”

Franz sat back again as the carriage turned in the other direction.

“Why didn’t I see you yesterday?”

“How could I?”...

“You were invited to my sister’s.”

“Oh — yes.”

“Why weren’t you there?”

“Because I can’t be with you — like that — with others around. No, I just can’t.” She shivered. “Where are we now?” she asked, after a moment.

They were passing under the railroad bridge at the entrance to the Reichsstrasse.

“On the way to the Danube,” replied Franz. “We’re driving toward the Reichs Bridge. We’ll certainly not meet any of our friends here,” he added, with a touch of mockery.

“The carriage jolts dreadfully.”

“We’re on cobblestones again.”

“But he drives so crooked.”

“Oh, you only think so.”

He had begun to notice himself that the vehicle was swaying to and fro more than was necessary, even on the rough pavement. But he said nothing, not wishing to alarm her.

“There’s a great deal I want to say to you today, Emma.”

“You had better begin then; I must be home at nine o’clock.”

“A few words may decide everything.”

“Oh, goodness, what was that!” she screamed. The wheels had caught in a car-track, and the carriage turned partly over as the driver attempted to free it. Franz caught at the man’s coat. “Stop that!” he cried. “Why, you’re drunk, man!”

The driver halted his horses with some difficulty. “Oh, no — sir—”

“Let’s get out here, Emma, and walk.”

“Where are we?”

“Here’s the bridge already. And the wind is not nearly as strong as it was. It will be nicer to walk a little. It’s so hard to talk in the carriage.”

Emma drew down her veil and followed him. “Don’t you call this windy?” she exclaimed as she struggled against the gust that met her at the corner.

He took her arm, and called to the driver to follow them.

They walked on slowly. Neither spoke as they mounted the ascent of the bridge; and they halted where they could hear the flow of the water below them. Heavy darkness surrounded them. The broad stream stretched itself out in gray, indefinite outlines; red lights in the distance, floating above the water, awoke answering gleams from its surface. Trembling stripes of light reached down from the shore they had just left; on the other side of the bridge the river lost itself in the blackness of open fields. Thunder rumbled in the distance; they looked over to where the red lights soared. A train with lighted windows rolled between iron arches that seemed to spring up out of the night for an instant, to sink back into darkness again. The thunder grew fainter and more distant; silence fell again; only the wind moved, in sudden gusts.

Franz spoke at last, after a long silence. “We must go away.”

“Of course,” Emma answered, softly.

“We must go away,” he continued, with more animation. “Go away altogether, I mean—”

“Oh, we can’t!”

“Only because we are cowards, Emma.”

“And my child?”

“He will let you have the boy, I know.”

“But how shall we go?” Her voice was very low. “You mean — to run away—”

“Not at all. You have only to be honest with him; to tell him that you cannot live with him any longer; that you belong to me.”

“Franz — are you mad?”

“I will spare you that trial, if you wish. I will tell him myself.”

“No, Franz, you will do nothing of the kind.”

He endeavored to read her face. But the darkness showed him only that her head was turned toward him.

He was silent a few moments more. Then he spoke quietly: “You need not fear; I shall not do it.”

They walked toward the farther shore. “Don’t you hear a noise?” she asked. “What is it?”

“Something is coming from the other side,” he said.

A slow rumbling came out of the darkness. A little red light gleamed out at them. They could see that it hung from the axle of a clumsy country cart, but they could not see whether the cart was laden or not and whether there were human beings on it. Two other carts followed the first. They could just see the outlines of a man in peasant garb on the last cart, and could see that he was lighting his pipe. The carts passed them slowly. Soon there was nothing to be heard but the low rolling of the wheels as their own carriage followed them. The bridge dropped gently to the farther shore. They saw the street disappear into blackness between rows of trees. Open fields lay before them to the right and to the left; they gazed out into gloom indistinguishable.

There was another long silence before Franz spoke again. “Then it is the last time—”

“What?—” Emma’s tone was anxious.

“The last time we are to be together. Stay with him, if you will. I bid you farewell.”

“Are you serious?”

“Absolutely.”

“There, now you see, it is you who always spoil the few hours we have together? — not I.”

“Yes, you’re right,” said Franz. “Let’s drive back to town.”

She held his arm closer. “No,” she insisted, tenderly, “I don’t want to go back. I won’t be sent away from you.”

She drew his head down to hers, and kissed him tenderly. “Where would we get to if we drove on down there?” she asked.

“That’s the road to Prague, dear.”

“We won’t go quite that far,” she smiled, “but I’d like to drive on a little, down there.” She pointed into the darkness.

Franz called to the driver. There was no answer; the carriage rumbled on, slowly. Franz ran after it, and saw that the driver was fast asleep. Franz roused him roughly. “We want to drive on down that street. Do you hear me?”

“All right, sir.”

Emma entered the carriage first, then Franz. The driver whipped his horses, and they galloped madly over the moist earth of the road-bed. The couple inside the cab held each other closely as they swayed with the motion of the vehicle.

“Isn’t this quite nice?” whispered Emma, her lips on his.

In the moment of her words she seemed to feel the cab mounting into the air. She felt herself thrown over violently, readied for some hold, but grasped only the empty air. She seemed to be spinning madly like a top, her eyes closed, suddenly she found herself lying on the ground, a great silence about her, as if she were alone, far away from all the world. Then noises began to come into her consciousness again; hoofs beat the ground near her; a low moaning came from somewhere; but she could see nothing. Terror seized her; she screamed aloud. Her terror grew stronger, for she could not hear her own voice. Suddenly she knew what had happened; the carriage had hit some object, possibly a mile-stone; had upset, and she had been thrown out. Where is Franz? was her next thought. She called his name. And now she could hear her voice, not distinctly yet, but she could hear it. There was no answer to her call. She tried to get up. After some effort she rose to a

sitting posture, and, reaching out, she felt something, a human body, on the ground beside her. She could now begin to see a little through the dimness. Franz lay beside her, motionless. She put out her hand and touched his face; something warm and wet covered it. Her heart seemed to stop beating — Blood? — Oh, what had happened? Franz was wounded and unconscious. Where was the coachman? She called him, but no answer came. She still sat there on the ground. She did not seem to be injured, although she ached all over. "What shall I do?" she thought; "what shall I do? How can it be that I am not injured? Franz!" she called again. A voice answered from somewhere near her.

"Where are you, lady? And where is the gentleman? Wait a minute, Miss — I'll light the lamps, so we can see. I don't know what's got into the beasts to-day. It ain't my fault, Miss, sure — they ran into a pile of stones."

Emma managed to stand up, although she was bruised all over. The fact that the coachman seemed quite uninjured reassured her somewhat. She heard the man opening the lamp and striking a match. She waited anxiously for the light. She did not dare to touch Franz again. "It's all so much worse when you can't see plainly," she thought. "His eyes may be open now — there won't be anything wrong...."

A tiny ray of light came from one side. She saw the carriage, not completely upset, as she had thought, but leaning over toward the ground, as if one wheel were broken. The horses stood quietly. She saw the milestone, then a heap of loose stones, and beyond them a ditch. Then the light touched Franz's feet, crept up over his body to his face, and rested there. The coachman had set the lamp on the ground beside the head of the unconscious man. Emma dropped to her knees, and her heart seemed to stop beating as she looked into the face before her. It was ghastly white; the eyes were half open, only the white showing. A thin stream of blood trickled down from one temple and ran into his collar. The teeth were fastened into the under lip. "No — no — it isn't possible," Emma spoke, as if to herself.

The driver knelt also and examined the face of the man. Then he took the head in both his hands and raised it. "What are you doing?" screamed Emma, hoarsely, shrinking back at the sight of the head that seemed to be rising of its own volition.

"Please, Miss — I'm afraid — I'm thinking — there's a great misfortune happened—"

"No — no — it's not true!" said Emma. "It can't be true! — You are not hurt? Nor am I—"

The man let the head he held fall back again into the lap of the trembling Emma. "If only some one would come — if the peasants had only passed fifteen minutes later."

"What shall we do?" asked Emma, her lips trembling.

"Why, you see, Miss, if the carriage was all right — but it's no good as it is — we've got to wait till some one comes—" he talked on, but Emma did not hear him. Her brain seemed to awake suddenly, and she knew what was to be done. "How far is it to the nearest house?" she asked.

"Not much further, Miss — there's Franz-Josef's land right there. We'd see the houses if it was lighter — it won't take five minutes to get there."

"Go there, then; I'll stay here — Go and fetch some one."

"I think I'd better stay here with you, Miss. Somebody must come; it's the main road."

"It'll be too late; we need a doctor at once."

The coachman looked down at the quiet face, then he looked at Emma, and shook his head.

"You can't tell," she cried.

"Yes, Miss — but there'll be no doctor in those houses."

"But there'll be somebody to send to the city—"

"Oh, yes, Miss — they'll be having a telephone there, anyway! We'll telephone to the Rescue Society."

"Yes, yes, that's it. Go at once, run — and bring some men back with you. Why do you wait? Go at once. Hurry!"

The man looked down again at the white face in her lap. "There'll be no use here for doctor or Rescue Society, Miss."

"Oh, go! — for God's sake go!"

"I'm going, Miss — but don't get afraid in the darkness here."

He hurried down the street. "'Twasn't my fault," he murmured as he ran. "Such an idea! to drive down this road this time o' night."

Emma was left alone with the unconscious man in the gloomy street.

"What shall I do now?" she thought "It can't be possible — it can't." The thought circled dizzily in her brain— "It can't be possible." Suddenly she seemed to hear a low breathing. She bent to the pale lips — no — not the faintest breath came from them. The blood had dried on temple and cheek. She gazed at the eyes, the half-closed eyes, and shuddered. Why couldn't she believe it?... It must be true — this was Death! A shiver ran through her — she felt but one thing— "This is a corpse. I am here alone with a corpse! — a corpse that rests on my lap!" With trembling hands she pushed the head away, until it rested on the ground. Then a feeling of horrible alone-ness came over her. Why had she sent the coachman away? What should she do here all alone with this dead man in the darkness? If only some one would come — but what was she to do then if anybody did come? How long would she have to wait here? She looked down at the corpse again. "But I'm not alone with him," she thought, "the light is there." And the light seemed to her to become alive, something sweet and friendly, to which she owed gratitude. There was more life in this little flame than in all the wide night about her. It seemed almost as if this light was a protection for her, a protection against the terrible pale man who lay on the ground beside her. She stared into the light until her eyes wavered and the flame began to dance. Suddenly she felt herself awake — wide awake. She sprang to her feet. Oh, this would not do! It would not do at all — no one must find her here with him. She seemed to be outside of herself, looking at herself standing there on the road, the corpse and the light below her; she saw herself grow into strange, enormous proportions, high up into the darkness. "What am I waiting for?" she asked herself, and her brain reeled. "What am I waiting for? The people who might come? They don't need me. They will come, and they will ask questions — and I — why am I here? They will ask who I am — what shall I answer? I will not answer them — I will not say a word — they cannot compel me to talk."

The sound of voices came from the distance.

"Already?" she thought, listening in terror. The voices came from the bridge. It could not be the men the driver was bringing with him. But whoever it was would see the light — and they must not see it, for then she would be discovered. She overturned the lantern with her foot, and the light went out. She stood in utter darkness. She could see nothing — not even him. The pile of stones shone dimly. The voices came nearer. She trembled from head to foot; they must not find her here. That was the only thing of real importance in all the wide world — that no one should find her here. She would be lost if they knew that this — this corpse — was her lover. She clasps her hands convulsively, praying that the people, whoever they were, might pass by on the farther side of the road, and not see her. She listens breathless. Yes, they are there, on the other side — women, two women, or perhaps three. What are they talking about? They have seen the carriage, they speak of it — she can distinguish words. "A carriage upset—" What else do they say? She cannot understand — they walk on — they have passed her — Ah — thanks — thanks to Heaven! — And now? What now? Oh, why isn't she dead, as he is? He is to be envied; there is no more danger, no more fear for him. But so much — so much for her to tremble for. She shivers at the thought of being found here, of being asked, "Who are

you?" She will have to go to the police station, and all the world will know about it — her husband — her child. She cannot understand why she has stood there motionless so long. She need not stay here — she can do no good here — and she is only courting disaster for herself. She makes a step forward — Careful! the ditch is here — she crosses it — how wet it is — two paces more and she is in the middle of the street. She halts a moment, looks straight ahead, and can finally distinguish the gray line of the road leading onward into darkness. There — over there — lies the city. She cannot see it, but she knows the way. She turns once more. It does not seem so dark now. She can see the carriage and the horses quite distinctly — and, looking hard, she seems to see the outline of a human body on the ground. Her eyes open wide. Something seems to clutch at her and hold her here — it is he — she feels his power to keep her with him. With an effort she frees herself. Then she perceives that it was the soft mud of the road that held her. And she walks onward — faster — faster — her pace quickens to a run. Only to be away from here, to be back in the light — in the noise — among men. She runs along the street, raising her skirt high, that her steps may not be hindered. The wind is behind her, and seems to push her along. She does not know what it is she flees from. Is it the pale man back there by the ditch? No, now she knows, she flees the living, not the dead, the living, who will soon be there, and who will look for her. What will they think? Will they follow her? But they cannot catch up with her now, she is so far away, she is nearing the bridge, there is danger. No one can know who she was, no one can possibly imagine who the woman was who drove down through the country road with the dead man. The driver does not know her; he would not recognize her if he should ever see her again. They will not take the trouble to find out who she is. Who cares? It was wise of her not to stay — and it was not cowardly either. Franz himself would say it was wise. She must go home; she has a husband, a child; she would be lost if any one should see her there with her dead lover. There is the bridge; the street seems lighter — she hears the water beneath her. She stands there, where they stood together, arm in arm — when was it? How many hours ago? It cannot be long since then. And yet — perhaps she lay unconscious long, and it is midnight now, or near morning, and they have missed her at home. Oh, no — it is not possible. She knows that she was not unconscious, she remembers everything clearly. She runs across the bridge, shivering at the sound of her own steps. Now she sees a figure coming toward her; she slows her pace. It is a man in uniform. She walks more slowly, she does not want to attract attention. She feels the man's eyes resting on her — suppose he stops her! Now he is quite near; it is a policeman. She walks calmly past him, and hears him stop behind her. With an effort she continues in the same slow pace. She hears the jingle of street-car bells — ah, it cannot be midnight yet. She walks more quickly — hurrying toward the city, the lights of which begin there by the railroad viaduct — the growing noise tells her how near she is. One lonely stretch of street, and then she is safe. Now she hears a shrill whistle coming rapidly nearer — a wagon flies swiftly past her. She stops and looks after it; it is the ambulance of the Rescue Society. She knows where it is going. "How quickly they have come," she thinks; "it is like magic." For a moment she feels that she must call to them, must go back with them. Shame, terrible, overwhelming shame, such las she has never known before, shakes her from head to foot — she knows how vile, how cowardly she is. Then, as the whistle and the rumble of wheels fade away in the distance, a mad joy takes hold of her. She is saved — saved! She hurries on; she meets more people, but she does not fear them — the worst is over. The noise of the city grows louder, the street is lighter, the skyline of the Prater street rises before her, and she knows that she can sink into a flood tide of humanity there and lose herself in it. When she comes to a street lamp she is quite calm enough now to take out her watch and look at it. It is ten minutes to nine. She holds the watch to her ear — it is ticking merrily. And she thinks: "Here I am, alive, unharmed — and he — he — dead. It is Fate." She feels as if all had been forgiven — as if she had never sinned. And what if Fate had willed otherwise? If it were she lying there in the ditch, and he who

remained alive? He would not have run away — but then he is a man. She is only a woman, she has a husband, a child — it was her right — her duty — to save herself. She knows that it was not a sense of duty that impelled her to do it. But what she has done was right — she had done right instinctively — as all good people do. If she had stayed she would have been discovered by this time. The doctors would question her. And all the papers would report it next morning; she would have been ruined forever, and yet her ruin could not bring him back to life. Yes, that was the main point, her sacrifice would have been all in vain. She crosses under the railway bridge and hurries on. There is the Tegethoff Column, where so many streets meet. There are but few people in the park on this stormy evening, but to her it seems as if the life of the city was roaring about her. It was so horribly still back there. She had plenty of time now. She knows that her husband will not be home before ten o'clock. She will have time to change her clothes. And then it occurs to her to look at her gown. She is horrified to see how soiled it is. What shall she say to the maid about it? And next morning the papers will all bring the story of the accident, and they will tell of a woman. Who had been in the carriage, and who had run away. She trembled afresh. One single carelessness and she is lost, even now. But she has her latch-key with her; she can let herself in; no one will hear her come. She jumps into a cab and is about to give her address, then suddenly she remembers that this would not be wise. She gives any number that occurs to her.

As she drives through the Prater street she wishes that she might feel something — grief-horror — but she cannot. She has but one thought, one desire — to be at home, in safety. All else is indifferent to her. When she had decided to leave him alone, dead, by the roadside — in that moment everything seemed to have died within her, everything that would mourn and grieve for him. She has no feeling but that of fear for herself. She is not heartless — she knows that the day will come when her sorrow will be despair — it may kill her even. But she knows nothing now, except the desire to sit quietly at home, at the supper table with her husband and child. She looks out through the cab window. She is driving through the streets of the inner city. It is brilliantly light here, and many people hurry past. Suddenly all that she has experienced in the last few hours seems not to be true, it is like an evil dream; not something real, irreparable. She stops her cab in one of the side streets of the Ring, gets out, turns a corner quickly, and takes another carriage, giving her own address this time. She does not seem able to think of anything any more. "Where is he now?" She closes her eyes and sees him on the litter, in the ambulance. Suddenly she feels that he is here beside her. The cab sways, she feels the terror of being thrown out again, and she screams aloud. The cab halts before the door of her home. She dismounts hastily, hurries with light steps through the house door, unseen by the concierge, runs up the stairs, opens her apartment door very gently, and slips unseen into her own room. She undresses hastily, hiding the mud-stained clothes in her cupboard. To-morrow, when they are dry, she can clean them herself. She washes hands and face, and slips into a loose housegown.

The bell rings. She hears the maid open the door, she hears her husband's voice, and the rattle of his cane on the hat-stand. She feels she must be brave now or it will all have been in vain. She hurries to the dining-room, entering one door as her husband comes in at the other.

"Ah, you're home already?" he asks.

"Why, yes," she replies, "I have been home some time."

"They evidently didn't hear you come in."

She smiles without effort. But it fatigues her horribly to have to smile. He kisses her forehead.

The little boy is already at his place by the table. He has been waiting some time, and has fallen asleep, his head resting on an open book.

She sits down beside him; her husband takes his chair opposite, takes up a paper, and glances carelessly at

it. Then he says: “The others are still talking away there.”

“What about?” she asks.

And he begins to tell her about the meeting, at length. Emma pretends to listen, and nods now and then. But she does not hear what he is saying, she feels dazed, like one who has escaped terrible danger as by a miracle; she can feel only this: “I am safe; I am at home.” And while her husband is talking she pulls her chair nearer the boy’s and lifts his head to her shoulder. Fatigue inexpressible comes over her. She can no longer control herself; she feels that her eyes are closing, that she is dropping asleep.

Suddenly another possibility presents itself to her mind, a possibility that she had dismissed the moment she turned to leave the ditch where she had fallen. Suppose he were not dead! Suppose — oh, but it is impossible — his eyes — his — lips — not a breath came from them! But there are trances that are like death, which deceive even practised eyes, and she knows nothing about such things. Suppose he is still alive — suppose he has regained consciousness and found himself alone by the roadside — suppose he calls her by her name? He might think she had been injured; he might tell the doctors that there was a woman with him, and that she must have been thrown to some distance. They will look for her. The coachman will come back with the men he has brought, and will tell them that she was there, unhurt — and Franz will know the truth. Franz knows her so well — he will know that she has run away — and a great anger will come over him. He will tell them her name in revenge. For he is mortally injured, and it will hurt him cruelly that she has left him alone in his last hour. He will say: “That is Mrs. Emma —— —. I am her lover. She is cowardly and stupid, too, gentlemen, for she might have known you would not ask her name; you would be discreet; you would have let her go away unmolested. Oh, she might at least have waited until you came. But she is vile — utterly vile — ah!—”

“What is the matter?” asks the Professor, very gravely, rising from his chair.

“What? What?”

“Yes, what is the matter with you?”

“Nothing.” She presses the boy closer to her breast.

The Professor looks at her for a few minutes steadily.

“Didn’t you know that you had fallen asleep, and—”

“Well? — And—”

“And then you screamed out in your sleep.”

“Did I?”

“You screamed as if you were having a nightmare. Were you dreaming?”

“I don’t know—”

And she sees her face in a mirror opposite, a face tortured into a ghastly smile. She knows it is her own face, and it terrifies her. She sees that it is frozen; that this hideous smile is frozen on it, and will always be there, all her life. She tries to cry out. Two hands are laid on her shoulders, and between her own face and the mirrored one her husband’s face pushes its way in; his eyes pierce into hers. She knows that unless she is strong for this last trial all is lost. And she feels that she is strong; she has regained control of her limbs, but the moment of strength is short. She raises her hands to his, which rest on her shoulders; she draws him down to her, and smiles naturally and tenderly into his eyes.

She feels his lips on her forehead, and she thinks: “It is all a dream — he will never tell — he will never take revenge like that — he is dead — really dead — and the dead are silent—”

“Why did you say that?” she hears her husband’s voice suddenly.

She starts. “What did I say?” And it seems to her as if she had told everything, here at the table — aloud

before every one — and again she asks, shuddering before his horrified eyes, “What did I say?”

“The dead are silent,” her husband repeats very slowly.

“Yes,” she answers.

And she reads in his eyes that she can no longer hide anything from him. They look long and silently at each other. “Put the boy to bed,” he says at last. “You have something to tell me, have you not?”

“Yes—”

She knows now that within a few moments she will tell this man everything — this man, whom she has deceived for many years.

And while she goes slowly through the door, holding her boy, she feels her husband’s eyes still resting on her, and a great peace comes over her, the assurance that now many things would be right again.

None but the Brave (1900)

Original German Title: 'Leutnant Gustl'

Translated by Richard L. Simon, 1926

How long is this thing going to last? Let's see what time it is... perhaps I shouldn't look at my watch at a serious concert like this. But no one will see me. If anyone does, I'll know he's paying just as little attention as I am. In that case I certainly won't be embarrassed.... Only quarter to ten?... I feel as though I'd been here for hours. I'm just not used to going to concerts.... What's that they're playing? I'll have a look at the program.... Yes that's what it is: an oratorio. Thought it was a mass. That sort of thing belongs in church, and in church only. There's one advantage that church has over a concert: you can leave whenever you want to. — I wish I were sitting on the aisle! Steady, steady! Even oratorios end some time. Perhaps this one's very beautiful, and I'm just in the wrong mood. Well, why not? When I think that I came here for diversion... I should have given my ticket to Benedek. He likes this sort of thing. Plays violin. But in that case Kopetzsky would have felt insulted. It was very nice of him; meant well, at least. He's a good fellow, Kopetzsky! The only one I can really trust.... His sister is singing up there on the platform. There are at least a hundred women up there — all of them dressed in black. How am I to know which one is Kopetzsky's sister? They gave him a ticket because she was singing in the chorus.... Why then, didn't Kopetzsky go? — They're singing rather nicely now. It's inspiring! Bravo! Bravo!... Yes, I'll applaud along with the rest of them. The fellow next to me is clapping as if he were crazy. Wonder if he really likes it as much as all that? — Pretty girl over there in the box! Is she looking at me or at the man with the blond beard?... Ah, here we have a solo! Who is it? ALTO: FRÂULEIN WALKER, SOPRANO: FRÂULEIN MICHALEK... that one is probably the soprano... I haven't been at the opera for an awfully long time. Opera always amuses me, even when it's dull. I might go again the day after tomorrow. They're playing *Traviata.* No, day after tomorrow I'll probably be dead! Oh, nonsense; I can't even believe that myself! Just wait, Doctor, you'll stop making remarks like that! You'll get what's coming to you!...

I wish I could see the girl in the box more clearly. I'd like to borrow an opera glass. But this fellow next to me would probably eat me if I broke in on his reveries.... Wonder where Kopetzsky's sister is sitting? Wonder if I'd recognize her? I've met her only two or three times, the last time at the Officers' Club. Wonder if they're all good girls, all hundred of them? Oh, Lord!... ASSISTED BY THE SINGING

CLUB — Singing Club... that's a good one! I'd always imagined that members of a Singing Club would be something like Vienna chorus girls; that is, I might have known they'd be nothing like them at all! Pleasant recollection! That time at *Green Gate*... What was her name? And then she once sent me a post card from Belgrade... that's a good place too! Well, Kopetzsky's lucky right now, sitting in the café, smoking a good cigar!

Why's that fellow staring at me all the time? I suppose he notices how bored I am... I'll have you know that if you keep on looking fresh like that I'll meet you in the lobby later and settle with you! He's looking the other way already! They're all afraid of my eyes... "You have the most beautiful eyes I've ever seen!" Steffi said that the other day.... Oh Steffi, Steffi, Steffi! — It's Steffi's fault that I'm sitting here bored by the hour. Oh, these letters from Steffi postponing engagements — they're getting on my nerves! What fun this evening

might have been! Think I'll read Steffi's letter again. There, I've got it. But if I take it out of my pocket, I'll annoy the fellow next to me. — I know what's in it... she can't come because she has to have dinner with "him."... That was funny a week ago when she was at the garden party with him, and I was sitting opposite Kopetzsky; she was continually flirting with me. He didn't notice a thing — why, it's amazing! He's probably a Jew. Works in a bank. And his black moustache.... Probably a lieutenant in the reserve as well! Well, he'd better not come to practice in our regiment! They keep on commissioning too many Jews — that's the cause of all this anti-Semitism. The other day at the club, when the affair came up between the Doctor and the Mannheimers... they say the Mannheimers themselves are Jews, baptized, of course... they don't look it — especially Mrs. Mannheimer... blond, beautiful figure.... It was a good party, all in all. Wonderful dinner, excellent cigars.... They must have piles of money.

Hooray! It'll soon be over! Yes, the whole chorus is rising... looks fine — imposing! — Organ too! I like the organ.... Ah! that sounds good! Fine! It's really true, I ought to go to concerts more often.... I'll tell Kopetzsky how beautiful it was.... Wonder whether I'll meet him at the café today? — Oh Lord, I don't feel like going there; I got enough of it yesterday! A hundred and sixty Gulden on one card — it was stupid! And who won all the money? Ballert. Ballert, who needed it least of all.... It's Ballert's fault that I had to go to this rotten concert.... Otherwise I might have played again today, and perhaps won back something. But I'm glad I've promised myself to stay away from cards for a whole month.... Mother'll make a face again when she gets my letter! — Ah, she ought to go and see Uncle. He's rich as Croesus; a couple of hundred Gulden never worried him. If I could only get him to send me a regular allowance... But, no, I've got to beg for every crown. Then he always says that crops were poor last year!... Wonder whether I ought to spend a two weeks' vacation there again this summer? I'll be bored to death there.... If the... What was her name?... Funny, I can't remember a single name! Oh, yes: Etelka!... Couldn't understand a word of German... nor was it necessary.... There was nothing to say!... Yes, it ought to be all right, fourteen days of country air and fourteen nights with Etelka or someone else.... But I ought to be with Papa and Mamma for at least a week. She looked badly last Christmas.... Well, she'll be over her worries by now. If I were in her place I'd be happy that Papa's been retired on pension. — And Clara'll be married some time. Uncle will contribute something.... Twenty-eight isn't so old.... I'm sure Steffi's no younger.... It's really remarkable: the fast girls stay young much longer. Maretti, who played in *Sans Gêne* recently, — she's easily thirty-seven, and looks... Well, I wouldn't have said no! Too bad she didn't ask me....

Getting hot! Not over yet? Ah, I'm looking forward to the fresh air outside. I'll take a little walk around the Ring.... Today: early to bed, so as to be fresh for tomorrow afternoon! Funny, how little I think of it; it means nothing to me! The first time it worried me a bit. Not that I was afraid, but I was nervous the night before.... Lieutenant Bisanz was a tough opponent. — And still, nothing happened to me!... And it's already a year and a half since then! Well, if Bisanz did nothing to me, the doctor certainly won't! Still, these inexperienced fencers are often the most dangerous ones. Doschintzky's told me that on one occasion a fellow who had never had a sword in his hand before almost killed him; and today Doschintzky is the fencing instructor of the militia. —

I wonder whether he was as good then as he is now?... Most important of all: keep cool. I don't feel the least angry now — but he was impudent — unbelievably impudent. He'd probably not have done it if he hadn't been drinking champagne.... Such insolence! He's probably a Socialist. All the enemies of law and order are Socialists these days. They're a gang.... They'd like to do away with the whole army; but they never think of who could help them out if the Chinese ever invaded the country. Fools! I'll have to make an example of one of them. I was quite right. I'm really glad that I didn't let him get away with that remark. I'm

furious whenever I think of it! But I behaved superbly. The Colonel said it was absolutely correct. I'll get something out of this affair. I know some who would have let him get away with it. Muller certainly would have taken it "objectively," or whatever they call it. This being "objective" is a lot of nonsense. "Lieutenant" — just the way in which he said "Lieutenant" was annoying. "You will have to admit—"... — How did the thing start? How did I ever start talking to a Socialist?... As I recall it, the brunette I was taking to the buffet was with us, and then this young fellow who paints hunting scenes — what is his name?... Good Lord, he's to blame for it all! He was talking about the manoeuvres; and it was only then that the Doctor joined us and said something or other I didn't like — about playing at war — something like that — but I couldn't say anything just then.... Yes, that's it.... And then they were talking about the Military School.... Yes, that's the way it was.... And I was telling them about a patriotic rally.... And then the Doctor said — not immediately, but it grew out of my talk about the rally— "Lieutenant, you'll admit, won't you, that all of your friends haven't gone into military service for the sole purpose of defending our Fatherland!" What a nerve of anyone to dare say a thing like that to an officer! I wish I could remember exactly how I answered him — Oh, yes, something about "fools rushing in where angels fear to tread"... Yes, that was it.... And there was a fellow there who wanted to smooth over matters — an elderly man with a cold in the head — but I was wild! The Doctor had said it in a tone that meant he was talking about me, and me only. The only thing he could have added was that they had expelled me from college and for that reason I had to go into military service.... Those people don't understand our point of view. They're too dull-witted.... Not everyone can experience the thrill I did the first time I wore a uniform.... Last year at the manoeuvres — I would have given a great deal if it had suddenly been in earnest.... Mirovic told me he felt exactly the same way. And then when His Majesty rode up at the front and the Colonel addressed us — only a nincompoop wouldn't have been thrilled by it.... And now a boor comes along who has been a bookworm all his life and has the temerity to make a fresh remark.... Oh, just wait. Just see how fit you'll be for the duel!...

Well, what's this? It must be over by now.... "Ye, his Angels, praise the Lord" — Surely, that's the final chorus... Beautiful, really beautiful! And here I've completely forgotten the girl in the box who was flirting with me before... Where is she now?... Already gone.... That one over there seems rather nice.... Stupid of me — I left my opera glasses at home. I wish the cute little one over there would turn around. She sits there so properly. The one next to her is probably her mother.... I wonder whether I ought to consider marriage seriously? Willy was no older than I when he married. He's done well by himself — and always a pretty wife at home....Too bad that just today Steffi had no time! If I only knew where she were. I'd like to have a little tête-à-*tête* with her. There'd be a fine how-do-you-do! If he'd ever catch me, he'd palm her off on me. When I think what it must cost Fleiss to keep the Winterfeld woman! — and even at that, she's unfaithful to him right and left. Some day she'll get the fright that's coming to her.... Bravo, bravo! Ah, it's over.... Oh, it feels good to get up and stretch. Well! How long is he going to take to put that opera glass into his pocket?

"Pardon me, won't you let me pass?"

What a crowd! Better let the people go by.... Gorgeous person.... Wonder whether they're genuine diamonds?... That one over there's rather attractive.... The way she's flirting with me!... Why, yes, my lady, I'd be glad to!... Oh, what a nose! — Jewess.... Another one. It's amazing, half of them are Jews. One can't even hear an oratorio unmolested these days.... Now we're crowding together.

Why is that idiot back of me pushing so? I'll teach him better manners.... Oh, it's an elderly man!... Who's that bowing to me over there?... How do you do. Charmed! I haven't the slightest idea who he is.... I think I'll go right over to Leidinger's for a bite. Maybe Steffi'll be there after all. Why didn't she write and let me know where she's going with him? She probably didn't know herself. Oh, it's fierce, this day-to-day existence....

Poor thing — So, here's the exit.... Ah! that one's pretty as a picture! All alone? She's smiling at me. There's an idea — I'll follow her!... Now, down the steps.... Oh, a Major — a recent graduate — very nice, the way he returned my salute. I'm not the only officer here after all.... Where did the pretty girl go?... There she is, standing by the banister.... Now to the wardrobe... Better not lose her.... She's nabbed him already. What a hussy! Having someone call for her, and then laughing at me out of the side of her face! They're all worthless.... Good Lord, what a mob there at the wardrobe. Better wait a little while. Why doesn't the idiot take my check?

"Here, Number 224! It's hanging there! What's the matter — are you blind? Hanging there! There! At last.... Thank you." That fatty there is taking up most of the wardrobe.... "If you please!"...

"Patience, patience."

What's the fellow saying?

"Just have a little patience."

I'll have to answer him in kind. "Why don't you allow some room?"

"You'll get there in time." What's he saying? Did he say that to me? That's rather strong! I won't swallow that. "Keep quiet!"

"What did you say?"

That's a fine way to talk! This has got to stop right now.

"Don't push!"

"Shut your mouth!" I shouldn't have said that. That was a bit rough.... Well, I've done it now.

"Exactly what did you mean by that?"

Now he's turning around. Why I know him! — Heavens, it's the baker, the one who always comes to the café.... What's he doing here? He probably has a daughter or something in the chorus. Well, what's this? — What's he trying to do? It looks as though... Yes, Great Scott, he has the hilt of my sword in his hand! What's the matter? Is the man crazy?... "You Sir!..

"You, Lieutenant, just be altogether quiet."

What's he saying? For Heaven's sake, I hope no one's heard it. No, he's talking very softly.... Well, why doesn't he let go of my sword? Great God! This is getting rough. I can't budge his hand from the hilt. Let's not have a rumpus here! Isn't the Major behind him? Can anyone notice that he's holding the hilt of my sword? Why, he's talking to me! What's he saying!

"Lieutenant, if you dare to make the slightest fuss, I'll pull your sword out of the sheath, break it in two and send the pieces to your Regimental Commander. Do you understand me, you young fathead?"

What did he say? Am I dreaming? Is he really talking to me? How shall I answer him? But he's in earnest. He's really pulling the sword out. Great God! he's doing it!... I can feel it! He's already pulling it! What is he saying? For God's sake, no scandal! — What's he forever saying?

"But I have no desire to ruin your career.... So just be a good boy.... Don't be scared. Nobody's heard it.... Everything's all right.... And so that no one will think we've been fighting I'll act most friendly toward you.... I am honored, Sir Lieutenant. It has been a pleasure — I am honored."

Good God, did I dream that?... Did he really say that?... Where is he?

.. There he goes.... I must draw my sword and run him through — Heavens, I hope nobody heard it.... No, he talked very softly — right in my ear. Why don't I go after him and crack open his skull?

.. No, it can't be done. It can't be done.... I should have done it at once.... Why didn't I do it immediately?... I couldn't.... He wouldn't let go the hilt, and he's ten times as strong as I am.... If I had said another word he would actually have broken the sword in two. I ought to be glad that he spoke no louder. If

anyone had heard it, I'd have had to shoot myself on the spot.... Perhaps it was only a dream. Why is that man by the pillar looking at me like that? — Did he really hear it?... I'll ask him... ask him?! — Am I crazy? — Do I look queer? — I must be pale as a sheet — Where's the swine? I've got to kill him!... He's gone.... The whole place is empty.... Where's my coat?... Why, I'm already wearing it.... I didn't even notice it.... Who helped me on with it?... Oh, that one there. I'll have to tip him.... So. But what's it all about? Did it really happen? Did anyone really talk to me like that? Did anyone really call me a fat-head? And I didn't cut him to pieces on the spot?... But I couldn't.... He had a fist like iron. I just stood there as though I were nailed to the floor. I think I must have lost my senses. Otherwise, I would have used my other hand.... But then he would have drawn out my sword, and broken it, and everything would have been over.... Over and done with! And afterwards, when he walked away, it was too late.... I couldn't have run my sword through him from the back.

What, am I already on the street? How did I ever get here? — It's so cool.... Oh, the wind feels fine!... Who's that over there? Why are they looking over at me? I wonder whether they really heard it.

.. No, no one could have heard it.... I'm sure of it — I looked around immediately! No one paid any attention to me. No one heard a thing.... But he said it anyhow. Even if nobody heard it, he certainly said it. I just stood there and took it as if someone had knocked me silly.... But I couldn't say a word — couldn't do a thing. All I did was stand there —, quiet, absolutely quiet!... It's awful; it's unbearable; I must kill him on the spot, wherever I happen to meet him!... I let a swine like that get away with it! And he knows me... Great Heavens, he knows me — knows who I am!... He can tell everybody just exactly what he said to me!... No, he wouldn't do that. Otherwise, he wouldn't have talked so quietly.... He just wanted me to hear it alone!... But how do I know that he won't repeat it today or tomorrow, to his wife, to his daughter, to his friends in the café — For God's sake, I'll see him again tomorrow. As soon as I step into the café tomorrow, I'll see him sitting there as he does every day, playing Tarok with Schlesinger and the fancy flower merchant. No, that can't happen. I won't allow it to. The moment I see him I'll run him through.... No, I can't do that.... I should have done it right then and there!... If I only had! I'll go to the Colonel and tell him about the whole affair.... Yes, right to the Colonel.... The Colonel is always friendly — and I'll say to him — Colonel, I wish to report, Sir. He grasped the hilt of my sword and wouldn't let go of it; it was just as though I were completely unarmed.... What will the Colonel say? — What will he say? There's just one answer: dishonourable discharge!... Are those recruits over there? Disgusting. At night they look like officers.... Yes, they're saluting! — If they knew — if they really knew!... There's the Hochleitner Café. Probably a couple of officers in my company are there now.... Perhaps one or more whom I know.... Wonder if it wouldn't be best to tell the first one I meet all about it — but just as if it had happened to someone else?... I'm already growing a bit crazy.... Where the devil am I walking? What business have I out here in the street? — Where should I go? Wasn't I going to the Leidinger Café? Haha! If I were to sit down with them I'm sure everyone would see what had happened to me.... Well, something must happen.... But what?... Nothing, nothing at all — no one heard it. No one knows a thing. At least for the time being.... Perhaps I ought to visit him at his home and beg him to swear to me that he'll never tell a soul. — Ah, better to put a bullet through my head at once. That would be the cleverest way of all — the cleverest! — there's just nothing else left for me — nothing. If I were to ask the Colonel or Kopetzsky, or Blany, or Freidmair: — they'd all tell me the same thing. How would it be if I were to talk it over with Kopetzsky? Yes, that seems the most sensible thing to do. But what about tomorrow — tomorrow — yes, that's right, tomorrow — at four o'clock, in the armory, I'm to fight a duel. But I can't do it, I'm no longer qualified for duelling. Nonsense, nonsense, not a soul knows it, not a soul! — There are hundreds of people walking around to whom worse things have happened.... What about all those stories I've heard about Deckener — how he and Rederow fought with pistols.... And the duelling committee decided that the duel

could take place at that.... But what will the committee decide about me? — Fathead, fathead, and I just stood there and took it —! Great Heavens, it makes no difference whether anyone knows it or not! The chief thing is: I know he said it! I feel as though I'm not the same man I was an hour ago — I know that I'm not qualified for duelling, and that I must shoot myself. I wouldn't have another calm moment in my life. I'd always be afraid that someone might know about it in some way or another, and that some time someone might tell me about this evening's affair! — What a happy man I was an hour ago!... Just because Kopetzsky gave me a ticket, and just because Steffi postponed her date — destiny hangs on things like that.... This afternoon, all was sailing smoothly, and now I am a lost man about to shoot himself.... Why am I running this way? No one is chasing me. What's the time there? 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.... Eleven, Eleven.... I ought to go and get something to eat.... I'll certainly land somewhere. I might go and sit down in some little restaurant where no one would know me. — At any rate, a man must eat even though he kill himself immediately after. Haha! Death is no child's play.... Who said that recently? — It makes no difference.

I wonder who'll worry about me most,.. Mama or Steffi?... Steffi, Great God, Steffi!... She won't allow anyone to notice how she feels. Otherwise "he" will throw her out.... Poor little thing! — At my regiment.... No one will have the slightest idea why I did it. They'll all have their theories on why Gustl committed suicide. But no one will hit upon the real solution: that I had to shoot myself because a miserable baker, a low person who just happened to have a strong fist... It's too silly — too silly for words! — For that reason, a fellow like myself, young and fit.... Well, they'll all say he didn't have to commit suicide for a silly reason like that. It's a pity! But if I were to ask anyone right now, they'd all give me the same answer.... And if I were to ask myself.... Oh, the devil, we're absolutely helpless against civilians. People think that we're better off just because we carry swords, and if one of us ever makes use of a weapon, the story goes around that we're all born murderers. The paper will carry a story:

"Young Officer Suicide"... How do they always put it?... "Motive Concealed"... Haha!... "Mourning at his Coffin."... — But it's true. I feel as if I were forever telling myself a story.... It's true.... I must commit suicide. There's nothing else left to do — I can't allow Kopetzsky and Blany to come tomorrow morning and say to me: — Sorry, we can't be your seconds. I'd be a fool if I'd give them the chance — fool that I am, standing quietly by and letting myself be called a fathead.... Tomorrow everyone will know it. Fancy myself believing for a moment that a person like that won't repeat it everywhere.... Why, his wife knows it already! Tomorrow everyone in the café will know it. All the waiters will know it. Schlesinger will know it — so will the cashier girl — And even if he promised that he wouldn't tell anybody, he'll certainly tell them the day after tomorrow.... And if not then, in a week from now.... And if he were to get apoplexy tonight, I'd know it.... I'd know it. And I could no longer wear a cape and carry a sword if such a curse were on me!... So, I've got to do it — I've got to do it — what else? — Tomorrow afternoon the doctor might just as well run his sword through me.... Things like this have happened before.... And Bauer, poor fellow, lost his mind and died three days later.... And Brenitsch fell off his horse and broke his neck.... And furthermore, there's nothing else to do, not for me anyhow, certainly not for me! — There are men who would take it more lightly.... But God, what sort of men are they!... Fleischsalcher slapped Ringeiner's face when he caught him with his wife, whereupon Ringeiner quit and is now somewhere out in the country, married.... There are women, I suppose, who'll marry people like that!... On my word, I'll never shake hands with him if he ever returns to Vienna!... Well, you've heard it, Gustl: — life is over for you — finished, once and for all. I know it now, it's a simple story.... So! I'll be altogether calm.... I've always known it: if the occasion were ever to arise, I'd be calm, altogether calm.... But I would never have believed that it would come to this.... — That I'd have to kill myself just because a... Perhaps I didn't understand him correctly.... He was talking in an altogether different

tone at the end.... I was simply a little out of my mind on account of the singing and the heat.... Perhaps I was momentarily demented, and it's all not true.... Not true, haha! Not true! — I can still hear it.... It's still ringing in my ears, and I can still feel in my fingers how I tried to move his hand from the hilt of my sword. He's a husky brute.... I'm no weakling myself. Franziski is the only man in the regiment who's stronger than I.

Already at the bridge?... How far am I running? If I keep on this way I'll be at Kagran by midnight.... Haha!... Good Lord, how happy we were last September when we entered Kagran. Only two hours more, and Vienna!... I was dead tired when we got there.... Had slept like a log all afternoon, and by evening we were already at Ronacher's.... Kopetzsky and Ladsiner.... Who else was along with us at the time? — Yes, that's right... that volunteer, the one who told us the Jewish stories while we were marching. Sometimes they're pleasant fellows, these one-year men.... But all of them ought to become substitutes. For what sense is there to it: all of us slave for ages, and a fellow like him serves a year and receives the same distinction as we.... It's unfair! — But what's it to me? Why bother about it all? A private in the hospital corps counts for more than I do right now.... I no longer belong on the face of the earth.... All is over with me. Honor lost — all lost!... There's nothing else for me to do but load my revolver and... Gustl, Gustl, you're not thinking this thing out properly! Come to your senses!

.. There's no way out.... No matter how you torture your brain, there's no way out! — The point is, now that the end is here, behave like an officer and a gentleman so that the Colonel will say: — He was a good fellow, we'll always think well of him!... How many companies attend the funeral of a lieutenant?... I really must know that.... Haha! Even if the whole battalion turns out, even if the whole garrison turns out, and they fire twenty salutes, I'll never wake up! Last summer, after the Army Steeple-chase, I was sitting in front of the café with Engel.... Funny, I've never seen the fellow since.

.. Why did he have his left eye bandaged? I always wanted to ask him, but it didn't seem proper.... There go two artillery-men.... They probably think I'm following that woman.... Does she have to solicit me?... Oh, Lord! I wonder how that one can possibly earn a living.... I'd sooner... However, in time of need a person-will do almost anything... In Przemsyl — I was so horrified that I swore I'd never look at a woman again.... That was a ghastly time up there in Galicia.... Altogether a stroke of fortune that we ever returned to Vienna. Bokonny is still in Sambor, and will stay for ten years more, getting old and grey.... What happened to me today would never have happened if I'd remained there myself, and I'd far sooner grow old in Galicia than... Than what? Than what? — What is it? What is it? Am I crazy — the way I always forget? — Good God, I forget it every moment.... Has it ever happened before that a man within two hours of putting a bullet through his head digresses on all conceivable matters that no longer concern him? I feel as if I were drunk. Haha, drunk indeed! Drunk with death! Drunk with suicide! Ha, trying to be funny! Yes, I'm in a good mood — must have been born with one. Certainly, if I ever told anybody they'd say I were lying. — I feel as if I already had the revolver at my head.... Now, I'd pull the trigger — in a second all is over.... Not everyone gets over it so easily — others brood over it month after month. My poor cousin, on his back two years, couldn't move, had the most excruciating pains, what a time!... Care, is the only thing necessary; to aim well, so that nothing unforeseen happens, as it did to that substitute last year.... Poor devil, didn't die, but became blind.... What ever happened to him? Wonder where he's living now. Terrible to run around the way he — that is, he can't run around, he's led. A chap like him — can't be more than twenty years old right now. He shot at the girl more accurately.... She was dead at once.... Unbelievable, the reasons people have for killing. How can anyone be jealous?... I've never been jealous in my whole life. At this very moment Steffi is sitting comfortably at the dance hall; then she will go home with "him".... Doesn't mean a thing to me.... Not a thing. She has a nicely furnished place — a little bathroom with a red lamp — When she recently came in, in her

green kimono.... I'll never see the green kimono again — Steffi, herself, I'll never see again — And I'll never go up the fine broad steps in Gusshaus Strasse. Steffi will keep on amusing herself as if nothing had happened; she shan't tell a soul that her beloved Gustl committed suicide. But she'll weep — oh, yes, she'll weep. A great many people will weep.... Good God, Mamma! — No, no, I can't think about it. Oh, no, I can't bear to.... You're not to think about home at all, Gustl, you understand? Not — at — all.

This isn't bad. I'm now on the way to the Prater. Midnight.... That's another thing I didn't think of this morning, that tonight I'd be taking a walk in the Prater.... Wonder what the watchman there thinks....Well, I'll walk on. It's rather nice here. No fun to take a bite; no fun in the café. The air is pleasant and it's quiet.... Indeed, I'll have a great deal of quiet — as much as I could possibly want. Haha! — But I'm altogether out of breath. I must have been running like crazy.... Slower, slower, Gustl, you'll miss nothing, there's nothing more to do, nothing, absolutely nothing! What's this, am I getting a chill? — Probably on account of worrying, and I haven't eaten a thing. What's that beautiful smell?... Are the blossoms out yet? — What's today? — The fourth of April. It's been raining a great deal the last few days, but the street is almost entirely bare and it's dark. Hooh! Dark enough to give you the shivers.... That was really the only time in my whole life I was scared — when I was a little kid that time in the woods.... But I wasn't so little at that.... Fourteen or fifteen.... How long ago was it? — Nine years.... Easily. At eighteen I was a substitute; at twenty a lieutenant and next year I'll be... What'll I be next year? What do I mean; next year? What do I mean; next week? What do I mean; tomorrow?... What's this? Teeth chattering? Oh! — Well! let them chatter a while. Lieutenant, you are altogether alone right now and have no reason for showing off.... It's bitter, oh, it's bitter....

I'll sit on that bench..... Ah.... How far have I come? — How dark it is! That behind me there, that must be the second café.... I was in there last summer at the time our band gave a concert.... With Kopetzsky and with Ruttner — there were a couple of others along.... — Lord, I'm tired.... As tired as if I'd been marching for the last ten hours.... Yes, it would be fine to go to sleep now. — Ha, a lieutenant without shelter!... Yes, I really ought to go home.... What'll I do at home? — But what am I doing in the Prater? — Ah, it would be best never to get up at all — to sleep here and never wake up.... Yes, that would be comfortable! But, Lieutenant, things aren't going to be as comfortable as that for you.... What next? — Well I might really consider the whole affair in orderly sequence.... All things must be considered.... Life is like that.... Well, then, let's consider.... Consider what?... — No, the air feels fine.... I ought to go to the Prater more often at night.... That should have occurred to me sooner. It's all a thing of the past — the Prater, the air and taking walks.... Well, then, what next? — Off with my cap. It's pressing on my forehead.... I can't think properly.... Ah.... So!... Now, Gustl, collect your thoughts, make your final arrangements! Tomorrow morning will be the end.... Tomorrow morning at seven... seven o'clock is a beautiful hour. Haha! — At eight o'clock when school begins, all will be over.... Kopetzsky won't be able to teach — he'll be too broken up.... But naturally he'll know nothing about it.... He may not have heard of it.... They found Max Lippay only in the afternoon, and in the morning he had shot himself, and not a soul heard of it.... But why bother about whether Kopetzsky will teach school tomorrow.... Ha! — Well, then, at seven o'clock — Yes.... Well, what next?... Nothing more to consider. I'll shoot myself in my room and then — basta! The funeral will be Monday.... I know one man who'll enjoy it: the Doctor. The duel can't take place on account of the suicide of one of the combatants.... Wonder what they'll say at Mannheimers? — Well, he won't make much of it.... But his wife, his pretty, blond... She was worth considering.... Oh, yes, I would have had a chance with her if I'd only taken a little better care of myself.... Yes, with her it might have been something altogether different from Steffi.... Be on your toes all the time: that is, court in the proper way, send flowers, talk decently... not: meet me tomorrow afternoon at the barracks!... Yes, a decent woman like her — that might have been something. The captain's

wife at Przemsyl wasn't decent.... I could swear that Lubitzsky and Wermutek... and the shabby substitute — she was unfaithful with him too.... But Mannheimer's wife.... Yes, that would be entirely different. That would have been an experience that might almost have made me a different man — she might have given me more polish — or have given me more respect for myself — But always that kind... and I began so young — I was only a boy that time on my first vacation when I was home with my parents in Graz.... The Reidl woman was also along — she was Bohemian.... Must have been twice as old as I — came home only the following morning.... The way Father looked at me.... And Clara. I was most ashamed of all before Clara.... She was engaged at the time.

.. Wonder why the engagement never materialized. I didn't worry much about it at the time. Poor thing, never had much luck — and now she's going to lose her only brother.... Yes, you'll never see me again, Clara — it's all over. You didn't think, little sister, did you, when you saw me at the station on New Year's Day that you'd never see me again? — And Mother... Good God! Mother!... No, I can't allow myself to think of it. Ah, if I could only go home first.... Say I have a day's leave.... See Papa, Mama, Clara again before it's all over....Yes, I could take the first train at seven o'clock to Graz. I'd be there at one.... God bless you, Mama.... Hello, Clara!... How goes everything?... Well this is a surprise.... But they'll notice something.... If no one else, at least Clara will.... Surely, Clara.... Clara's a smart girl.... She wrote me such a sweet letter the other day, and I still owe her an answer — and the good advice she always gives me. Such a wholehearted creature.... Wonder whether everything wouldn't have turned out differently if I'd stayed at home. I might have studied political economy and gone into my uncle's business.... They all wanted me to do that when I was a kid.... By this time I'd be happily married to a nice, sweet girl.... Perhaps Anna — she used to like me a lot.... I just noticed it again the last time I was home — in spite of her husband and two children.... I could see it, just the way she looked at me.... And she still calls me "Gustly," the same way she used to.... It will hit her hard when she finds out the way I ended up — but her husband will say: — I might have known as much — a no-account like him! — They'll all think it was because I owed money.... It's not true. I've paid all my debts.... except the last hundred and sixty gulden — and they'll be here tomorrow. Well I must see to it that Ballert gets his hundred and sixty gulden — I must make a note of that before I shoot myself.... It's terrible, it's terrible!... If I only could run away from it all, and go to America where nobody knows about it. In America no one will know what happened here this evening.... No one will care. Just recently I read in the paper about Count Runge, who had to leave because of some nasty stories that were going around about him. He now owns a hotel over there and doesn't give a hoot for the whole bunch.... And in a couple of years I might return.... Not to Vienna, of course.... Nor to Graz... but I could go out to the farm.... And Mama and Papa would a dozen times rather have it that way — just so long as I stay alive.... And why worry about the other people at all? Who ever cares about me? — Kopetzsky's the only one who'd ever miss me.... Kopetzsky — the one who gave me the ticket today... and the ticket's to blame for it all. If he hadn't given it to me, I wouldn't have gone to the concert, and all this would never have happened.... What happened? It's just as if a whole century had passed — and it's only two hours ago. Two hours ago someone called me a fathead and wanted to break my sword. Great God, I'm starting to shout here at midnight! Why did it all happen? Couldn't I have waited longer until the whole wardrobe had emptied out? And why did I ever tell him to shut up? How did it ever slip out of me? I'm generally polite. I've never been so rude, even to my orderly.... But of course I was nervous: all the things that happened just at the same time.... The tough luck in gambling and Steffi's eternal stalling — and the duel tomorrow afternoon — and I've been getting too little sleep lately, and all the noise in the barracks.... I couldn't keep on standing it forever!... Before long I would have become ill — would have had to get a furlough.... Now it's no longer necessary.... I'll get a long furlough now —

without pay — Haha!...

How long am I going to keep on sitting here? It must be after midnight.... Didn't I hear the clock strike midnight a while ago? — What's that there? A carriage driving by? At this hour? I can already imagine... They're better off than I. Perhaps it's Ballert with his Bertha.... Why, of all people, Ballert? — Go ahead, right on! That was a good looking carriage His Highness had in Przemsyl.... He used to ride in it all the time on his way to the city to see Rosenberg. He was a good mixer, His Highness — chummy with everyone, a good drinking companion. Those were good times.... Although... It was in a lonely section and the weather was hot enough in the summer to kill you.... One afternoon three men were overcome by the heat.... Even the corporal in my own company — a handy fellow he was.

.. During the afternoon we used to lie down naked on the bed. Once Wiesner came into the room suddenly; I must just have been dreaming. I stood up and drew my sword — it was lying next to me.... Must have looked funny!... Wiesner laughed himself sick. He's now the riding master — sorry I didn't go into the cavalry myself. The old man didn't want me to — it would have been too expensive — but it makes no difference now.... Why? — Yes, I know: — I must die, that's why it makes no difference — I must die.... How then? — Look here, Gustl, you especially came down here to the Prater in the middle of the night so that not a soul would bother you — you can think over everything quietly.... That's all a lot of nonsense about America and quitting the service, and you haven't brains enough to start on another career. And when you reach the age of a hundred and think back to the time that a fellow wanted to break your sword, and called you a fathead and you stood there and couldn't do a thing — no, there's nothing more to think about — what's happened has happened. — That's all nonsense about Mama and Clara — they'll get over it — people get over everything.... Oh, Lord, how Mama wept when her brother died — and after four weeks she never thought of it again. She used to ride out to the cemetery... first, every week, then every month, and now only on the day of his death. Tomorrow is the day of my death — April 5th. Wonder whether they'll take my body to Graz — Haha! The worms in Graz will enjoy it! — But that's not my problem — I'll let others worry about that....Well then, what else is there to worry about?... Oh yes, the hundred and sixty gulden for Ballert — that's all decided — then I have no debts to meet. — Are there letters to write? Why? To whom?... Say good-bye? The devil I will — it's clear enough that a man's gone after he's shot himself! Everyone will soon notice that he's taken his leave.

.. If people only knew how little the whole thing bothers me, they wouldn't feel sorry — No use pitying me.... What have I had out of life? — One thing I'd like to have experienced: being in war — but I would have had to wait a long time for that.... Outside of that I've experienced everything. Whether a person's called Steffi or Kunigunde makes no difference.... And I've heard all the best operettas — and Lohengrin twelve times — and this evening I even heard an oratorio — and a baker called me a fathead. — Good God, I've had enough! Life's opened up all its secrets to me.... Well then, I'll go home slowly, very slowly, there's really no hurry. — I'll rest for a few minutes on the bench here in the Prater, and think about — just nothing at all. I'll never lie down in bed again. I'll have enough time to sleep. — This wonderful air! There'll be no more air...

WELL, what's this? — Hey, there, Johann, bring me a glass of fresh water.... What's this?... Where?... Am I dreaming? My head. Oh, Good Lord.... I can't see straight! — I'm all dressed! — Where am I sitting? — Holy God, I've been sleeping! How could I have been sleeping? It's already growing light. How long have I been sleeping? I mustn't ask — must look at my watch — can't see a thing.... Where are my matches? Won't a single one of them light?... Three o'clock, and I'm to have my duel at four. — No, not a duel — a suicide! It has nothing to do with a duel; I must shoot myself because a baker called me a fathead.... What, did it actually happen? — My head feels so funny.... My throat's all clogged up — I can't move at all — my right foot's

asleep. — Get up! Get up!... Ah, that's better! It's already growing light, and the air... Just like that morning when I was doing picket duty when we were camping in the woods. I woke up feeling differently that time.

There was a different sort of day ahead of me.... I wonder whether I get it all straight. There's the street — gray, empty — just now I'm the only person in the Prater. I was here once at four o'clock in the morning with Pansinger. — We were riding. I was on Colonel Mirovic's horse and Pansinger on his own nag. — That was May, a year ago — everything was in bloom — everything was green. Now it's still cold, but Spring will soon be here — it will be here in just a few days. — Lilies-of-the-valley, violets — pity I'll never see them again. Everyone else will enjoy them, but I must die! Oh, it's miserable! And others will sit in the café eating, as if nothing had happened — just the way all of us sat in the café on the evening of the day they buried Lippay.... And they all liked Lippay so much.... He was more popular in the regiment than I. — Why shouldn't they sit in the café when I kick off? — It's quite warm — much warmer than yesterday and there's a fragrance in the air — the blossoms must be out.... Wonder whether Steffi will bring me flowers? — It will never occur to her! She'll just ride out to... Oh, if it were still Adele... Adele! I'm sure I haven't thought of her for the last two years.... As long as I lived I never saw a woman weep the way she did.... That was absolutely the tenderest thing I ever lived through... she was so modest, so unassuming. — She loved me, I swear she did. — She was altogether different from Steffi.... I wonder why I ever gave her up.... It was too tame for me, yes, that was the whole thing.... Going out with the same person every evening.... Then perhaps I was afraid that I'd never be able to get rid of her — she always whimpered so. — Well, Gustl, you could have waited a long time until you found anyone who loved you as much as Adele. Wonder what she's doing now. Well, what would she be doing — probably has someone else now. This, with Steffi, is much more comfortable. I am with her only when I want to be — someone else can have all the unpleasantness — I'll take the pleasant part.... Well, in that case I certainly can't expect her to come to the cemetery. Wonder if there's anyone who'd go without feeling obliged to. Kopetzsky, perhaps — and that's all! Oh, it's sad, to have no one.... Nonsense! There's Papa and Mama and Clara. It's because I'm a son and a brother.... What more is there to hold us together? They like me of course — but what do they know about me? — That I'm in the service, that I play cards, and that I run around with fast women.... Anything more? Yes — that I often get good and sick of myself — though I never wrote anything to them about that — perhaps the reason is because I have never realized it myself. Well, Gustl, what sort of stuff are you muttering to yourself? It's just about time to start crying.... Disgusting! — Keep in step.... So! Whether a man goes to a rendezvous or on duty or to battle.... Who was it said that?... Oh yes, it was Major Lederer. When they were telling us that time at the canteen about Wingleder — the one who grew so pale before his first duel — and vomited.... Yes, a true officer will never betray by look or step whether he goes to a rendezvous or certain death! — Therefore, Gustl — remember the major's words! Ha! — Always growing lighter.... What's that whistling there? — Oh yes, there's the North Railroad Station.... It's never looked so long before.... There are the carriages. Nobody except street cleaners around. They're the last street cleaners I'll ever see — Ha! I always laugh when I think of it.... I don't understand myself.... Wonder whether it's that way with everybody, once they're entirely sure. Four thirty by the clock at the North Railroad Station.... The only question now is whether I'm to shoot myself at seven o'clock railroad time or Vienna time.... Seven o'clock.... Well, why exactly seven?... As if it couldn't be any other time as well.... I'm hungry — Lord, I'm hungry — No wonder.... Since when haven't I eaten?... Since — not since yesterday at six o'clock in the café! When Kopetzsky handed me the check — coffee and two rolls. — Wonder what the baker will say when he hears about it?... Damned swine. He'll know — he'll realize what it means to be an Austrian officer — a fellow like that can be beaten in the open street and think nothing of it. And if an officer is insulted even in secret, he's as good as dead.... If a rascal like him

would only fight a duel — but no, then he'd be very careful — he wouldn't take a chance like that. The fellow keeps on living quietly and peacefully while I — it's the end for me! He's responsible for my death.... Do you realize, Gustl, it is he who is responsible for your death! But he won't get off as easily as that! — No, no, no! I'll send Kopetzsky a letter telling him the whole story.... Better yet: — I'll write to the Colonel. He'll make a report to the officer in command....Just like an official report.... Just wait — you think, do you, that a matter like this can remain secret! — You're just wrong. — It will be reported and remembered forever. After that I'd like to see whether you'll venture into the café! — Ha!— "I'd like to see" is good! There are lots of things I'd like to see which unfortunately I won't be able to — Out! It's all over! —

At this moment Johann must be coming to my room. He notices that the Lieutenant hasn't slept at home. — Well he'll imagine all sorts of things. But that the Lieutenant has spent the night in the Prater — that, Good Lord, will never occur to him.... Ah, there goes the Fourty-fourth! They're marching out to target practice. Let them pass. — So, I'll remain right here.... A window is being opened up there. — Pretty creature. — Well I, at least, would want to put something around me, going to an open window. Last Sunday was the last time. I'd never have dreamt that Steffi would be the last. Oh God, that's the only real pleasure. Well, now the Colonel will ride after them in two hours in his grand manner. These big fellows take life easy. — Yes, yes, eyes right! Very good. If you only knew how little I care about you all. Ah, that's not bad at all: there goes Katzer. Since when has he been transferred to the Forty-fourth? — How do you do, good morning! What sort of a face is he making? Why is he pointing at his head? — My dear fellow, your skull interests me not at all.... Oh, it's that way. No, my good chap, you're mistaken: I've just spent the night in the Prater.... You will hear about it in the evening paper. "Impossible!" he'll say, "Early this morning as we were marching out to target practice I met him on the Prater Strasse" — Who'll be put in command of my platoon? I wonder whether they'll give it to Walter. Well that would be a fine how-do-you-do! A fellow totally devoid of imagination — should have been a plumber. — What, the sun coming up already! — This will be a beautiful day — a real Spring day. The devil — on a day like this! — Every cab driver will be in the world at eight o'clock this morning and I — well, what about me? Now really, it would be funny if I lost my nerve at the last minute just because of cab drivers.... What's up now? — Why's my heart thumping this way? — Not on account of the cab driver. No, oh no, it's because I haven't eaten since yesterday. But Gustl, be honest with yourself: you're scared — scared because you have never tried it before.... But that doesn't help. Being scared never helped anybody. Everyone has to experience it once. Some sooner, some later, and you just happen to have to experience it sooner. As a matter of fact you never were worth an awful lot, so the least you can do is to behave decently at the very end. In fact I demand that you do. I'll have to figure it out — figure out what?... I'm always trying to figure out.... It's lying in the drawer of my table — loaded — just: pull the trigger — certainly not very complicated!

That girl over there's already going to work... the poor girls!... Adele also used to have to go to work — I called for her a few times in the evening. When they have a job they don't play around so much with men. If Steffi had only listened to me. I always urged her to become a modiste.... Wonder how she'll find out about it? — The newspaper! She'll be angry that I didn't write to her about it. I believe I'm beginning to lose my mind. Why bother about whether she'll be angry or not? How long has the whole affair lasted?... Since January.... No, it must have begun before Christmas. I brought her some candy from Graz, and she sent me a note at New Year's.... Good Lord, that's right, I have her letters at home. Are there any I should have burned?... 'Mm, the one about Fallsteiner. If that letter is found — the rascal will get into trouble. Why should that bother me! — Well it wouldn't be much of an exertion.... But I can't look through all that scrawl.... It would be best to burn the whole bunch.... Who'll ever need them? They're all junk. — My few books I could leave

to Blany— “Through Night and Ice” — too bad I’ll never be able to finish it.... Didn’t have much chance to read these last few months....

Organ playing? In the church there.... Early Mass — haven’t been to one in an age.... Last time it was in February when the whole platoon was ordered to go. But it didn’t mean anything. — I was watching my men to see if they were religious and behaving properly.... I’d like to go to church... there’s something substantial about it after all.... Well, this afternoon I’ll know all about it. Ah, “this afternoon” is good! — what shall I do — go in? I think it would be a comfort to Mother if she knew!... It wouldn’t mean as much to Clara.... Well, in I go. It can’t hurt! Organ playing — singing — hm! — what’s the matter! I’m growing dizzy.... Oh God, Oh, God, Oh, God! I want somebody whom I can talk to before it happens! — How would it be — if I went to confession! The Father would certainly open his eyes if he heard me say at the end, “Pardon, Reverend Father; I am now going to shoot myself!”... Most of all I want to lie down there on the stone floor and cry my eyes out.... Oh no, I don’t dare do that. But crying sometimes helps so much.... I’ll sit down a moment, but I won’t go to sleep again as I did in the Prater!... — People who have religion are much better off.... Well, now my hands are beginning to tremble! If it keeps on this way, I’ll soon become so disgusted at myself that I’ll commit suicide out of pure shame! That old woman there — What is she still praying about?... It would be a good idea to say to her: You, please include me too.... I never learned how to do it properly. Ha! It seems that dying makes one stupid! — Stand up! Where have I heard that melody before? — Holy God! Last night! — It’s the melody from the oratorio! Out, out of here, I can’t stand it any more. ‘Pst! Not so much noise letting that sword drag — don’t disturb the people in their prayers — so! — It’s better in the open.... Light.... The time’s always growing shorter. Wish it were over already! — I should have done it at once in the Prater.... I should never go out without a revolver.... If I’d had one yesterday evening.... Good Lord! — I might take breakfast in the café.... I’m hungry. It always used to seem remarkable that people who were doomed to die drank coffee and smoked a cigar in the morning.... Heavens, I haven’t even smoked! I haven’t even felt like smoking! — This is funny: — I really feel like going to the café.... Yes, it’s already open and there’s none of our crowd there right now... and if there were — it would be a magnificent sign of cool headedness! “At six o’clock he was eating breakfast in the café and at seven he killed himself.”... — I feel altogether calm again. Walking is so pleasant — and best of all, nobody is compelling me. If I wanted to I could still chuck the whole business.... America.... What do I mean, “whole business”? What is a “whole business”? I wonder whether I’m getting a sunstroke. Oho! — am I so quiet because I still imagine that I don’t have to?... I do have to! I must! No, I will! Can you picture yourself, Gustl, taking off your uniform and beating it, and the damned swine laughing behind your back? And Kopetzsky not even shaking hands with you?... I blush just to think of it. — The watchman is saluting me.... I must acknowledge it.... “Good morning!” There, I’ve said “Good morning” to him!... It always pleases a poor devil like him.... Well, no one ever had to complain about me.... Off duty I was always pleasant.

.. When we were at the manœuvres I let off the officers of the Kompagnie Britannika. One time at drill I heard an enlisted man behind me say something about “the damned drudgery” and I didn’t even report him. — I merely said to him, “See here, be careful — some one else might hear it, and then you’ll be in hot water.”... The Burghof.... Wonder who’s on guard today? — The Bosniacs — they look good. Just recently the Lieutenant Colonel said “When we were down there in ’78, no one would have believed that they’d ever come up to us the way they have.” Good God, that’s a place I’d like to have been! Those fellows are all getting up from the bench. I’ll salute. It’s too bad that our company couldn’t have been there — that would have been so much more wonderful — on the field of battle for the Fatherland, than... Yes, Doctor, you’re getting off easily!... Wonder if someone couldn’t take my place? Great God, there’s an idea — I’ll leave word

for Kopetzsky or Wymetal to take my place in the duel!... He won't get off as easily as all that! — Oh well, what difference does it make what happens later on? I'll never hear anything about it! — The trees are beginning to bud.... I once picked up a girl here at the Volksgarten — she was wearing a red dress — lived in the Strozzigasse — later Roschlitz took her off my hands.... I think he still keeps her, but he never says anything about it — probably ashamed of it.... Steffi's still sleeping, I suppose.... She looks so pretty when she's asleep — just as if she couldn't count to five! — Well, they all look alike when they're asleep! — I ought to drop her a line.... Why not? Everyone does it... writes letters just before — I also want to write Clara to console Papa and Mama and the sort of stuff that one writes! — And to Kopetzsky. My Lord, I'll bet it would have been much simpler if I'd said good-bye to a few people... and the announcement to the officers of the regiment. — And the hundred and sixty gulden for Ballert.... Still lots of things to do. Well, nobody insists that I do it at seven.... There's still time enough after eight o'clock for being deceased! Deceased! That's the word — Then there's nothing else that a fellow can do.

Ringstrasse — I'll soon be at my café.... Funny, I'm actually looking forward to breakfast.... Unbelievable. — After breakfast I'll light a cigar, then I'll go home and write.... First of all I'll make my announcement to the officers of the regiment; then the letter to Clara — then the one to Kopetzsky — then the one to Steffi. What on earth am I going to write her?... *My dear child, you should probably never have thought*... Lord, what nonsense! — *My dear child, I thank you ever so much.... — My dear child, before I take my leave,* I *will not overlook the opportunity....* — Well, letter writing was never my forte.... *My dear child, one last farewell from your Gustl.*

.. — What eyes she'll make! It's lucky I wasn't in love with her.... It must be sad if one loves a girl and then.... Well, Gustl, let well enough alone: it's sad enough as it is.... Others would have come along after Steffi, and finally there would have been one who'd have been worth something — a young girl from a good, substantial family — it might have been rather nice.... — I must write Clara a detailed letter explaining why I couldn't do otherwise.... You must forgive me, my dear sister, and please console our dear parents. I know that I caused you all a good deal of worry and considerable pain; but believe me, I always loved all of you, and I hope that some time you will be happy, my dear Clara, and will not completely forget your unhappy brother.... — Oh, I'd better not write to her at all!... No, it's too sad. I can already feel the tears in my eyes, when I think.... At least I'll write to Kopetzsky.... A man to man farewell, and he'll let the others know.... — Already six o'clock — Oh no, half past five — quarter to. — If that isn't a charming little face! — The little dear, with her black eyes. I've met her so often in the Florianigasse! — Wonder what she'll say? — And she doesn't even know who I am — she'll only wonder why she doesn't see me any more.... Day before yesterday I made up my mind to speak to her the next time I met her. — She's been flirting enough.... She was so young — but I'll bet no angel at that!... Yes, Gustl! Don't put off till tomorrow what you can do today.... That fellow over there probably hasn't slept all night. — Well, now he'll go home comfortably and lie down. — So will I! — Haha! This is getting serious, Gustl! Well if there weren't a little fear connected with it, there'd be nothing to do at all — and on the whole I must say in behalf of myself that I have been behaving very nobly....

Where'll I go now? There's my café.... They're still sweeping.... Well, I'll go in.

There's the table where they always play Tarok.... Remarkable, I can't imagine why that fellow who's always sitting next to the wall should be the same one who... — Nobody here yet.... Where's the waiter?... Ha! — There's one coming out of the kitchen.... Quickly putting on his apron.... It's really no longer necessary!... Well, it is, for him.... He'll have to wait on other people today. "Good morning, Lieutenant."

"Good morning."

“So early today, Lieutenant?”

“Oh that’s all right, — I haven’t much time, I’ll just sit here with my cloak on.”

“Your order, Sir?”

“A cup of coffee.”

“Thank you — right away, Lieutenant.” Ah, there are the newspapers... are they out as early as this?... Wonder if there’s anything in them about me?... Well what would there be — Think I’ll look and see if there’s anything about my committing suicide! Haha! — Why am I still standing up?... Sit down by the window.... He’s already brought in the coffee. There, I’ll pull the curtain. I feel uncomfortable with people gaping in. But no one is passing by.... Ah, this coffee tastes good — it wasn’t a bad idea, this breakfast!... I feel like a new man. — The whole trouble was that I didn’t eat anything last night. Why has the fellow come back as soon as this? Oh, he’s also brought some rolls....

“Has the Lieutenant already heard?”

“Heard what?” For God’s sake, does he know something about it already?... Nonsense, it’s absolutely impossible!

“Herr Habetswallner—” What, what’s that? That’s the baker’s name.... What’s he going to say now?... Has he been here already? Was he here yesterday telling them the whole story?... Why doesn’t he tell me more?... He’s going to....

“ — had a stroke last night at twelve o’clock.”

“What?”... I mustn’t shout this way.... No, I can’t allow anybody to notice it.... But perhaps I’m dreaming.... I must ask him again....

“Who did you say had a stroke?” — Rather good, that! — I said it quite innocently! —

“The baker, Lieutenant. You must know him.... Don’t you remember the fat fellow who played Tarok with the officers here every afternoon... with Herr Schlesinger? Don’t you remember the one who used to sit opposite Herr Wasner — the one in the artificial flower business!”

I’m completely awake — everything seems to check up — and still I just can’t believe him. — I’ll have to ask him again.... Altogether innocently....

“You say that he was overcome by a stroke?... How did it happen? Who told you about it?”

“Who could know it sooner than we here, Lieutenant? — That roll you are eating there conies from Herr Habetswallner’s own bakery. His delivery man who comes here at half past four in the morning told us about it.”

Look out! I mustn’t give myself away.... I feel like shouting.... I’ll burst out laughing in a minute. In another second I’ll kiss Rudolph.... But I must ask him something else! Having a stroke doesn’t mean that he’s dead.... I must ask him — if he’s dead.... Altogether calmly — why should the baker concern me? — I must glance over the paper while I’m asking the waiter.

“You say he’s dead?”

“Why certainly, Lieutenant, he died immediately.”

Wonderful, wonderful!... It’s all because I went to church....

“He went to the theatre last night. On the way out he fell on the stairs — the janitor heard him fall.... Well, they carried him to his home, and he died long before the doctor ever arrived.”

“That’s sad — too bad. He was still in the prime of life.” I said that marvellously — not a soul would notice.... And I have to do everything to keep from shouting my lungs out and jumping up on the billiard table....

“Yes, Lieutenant, it is very sad. He was such a lovable gentleman; he’s been coming to this place for the

last twenty years — he was a good friend of the boss. And his poor wife....”

I don’t think I’ve felt as happy as this as long as I’ve lived. He’s dead — dead! Nobody knows about it, and nothing’s happened! — What a piece of luck that I came into the café.... Otherwise I’d certainly have shot myself — it’s like a benediction from heaven.... Where did Rudolph go? Oh, he’s talking to the furnace man.

.. — Well, he’s dead — dead. I just can’t seem to believe it! I’d better go and take a look at him myself. — He was probably overcome by a stroke of anger — couldn’t control himself.... Well, what difference does it make what he was! The main thing is he’s dead, and I can keep on living, and everything’s all right!... Funny, the way I keep on crumbling the roll — the roll Habetswallner baked himself! It tastes very good too, Herr Habetswallner. Splendid! — Ah, now I’ll light a cigar....

“Rudolph! Hey, Rudolph! Don’t argue so much with the furnace man.”

“What is it, Lieutenant?”

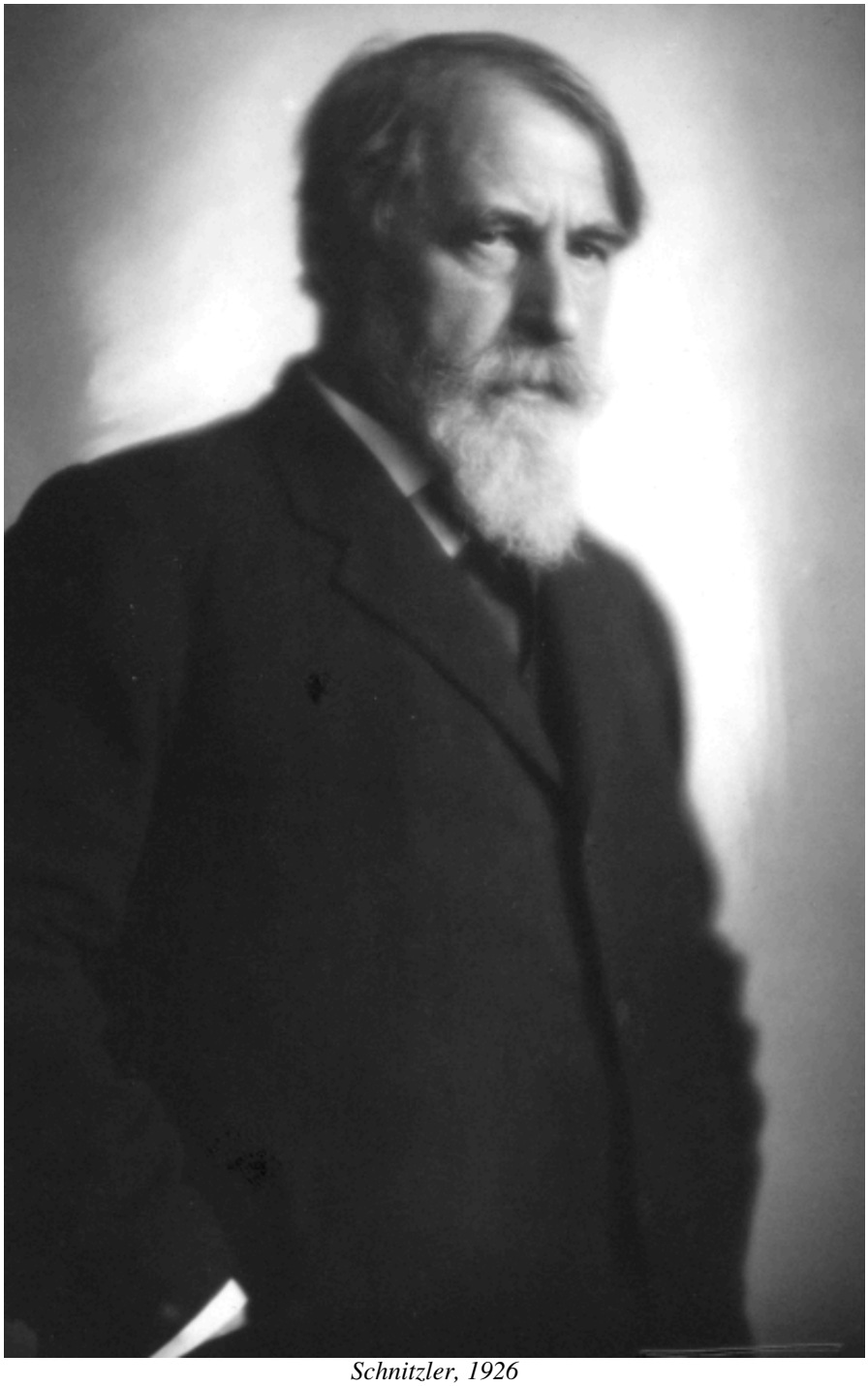
“Bring me a cigar.”... — I’m so happy, so happy!... What am I doing?... What am I doing?... Something’s got to happen, or I’ll be overcome by a stroke of joy! In a few minutes I’ll wander over to the barracks and let Johann give me a cold rub-down.... At half past seven we have drill and at half past nine formation. — And I’ll write Steffi to leave this evening open for me! And this afternoon at four.... Just wait, my boy, I’m in wonderful trim.... I’ll knock you to smithereens!

Little Novels (1929)

Translated by Eric Sutton, 1929

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Schnitzler, 1926

THE FATE OF THE BARON



IT WAS ON A MILD EVENING IN MAY THAT KLÄRE Hell made her first reappearance as Queen of the Night. The circumstances that had kept the singer away from the stage for nearly two months were well known. On March 15th the Prince Richard Bedenbruck had been thrown from his horse, and after lingering for a few hours, during which Kläre had not stirred from his side, had died in her arms. Kläre's despair had been so terrible that her friends feared first for her life, then for her reason, and, until lately, for her voice. The last anxiety proved as unfounded as the first two. When she appeared on the stage she was greeted with friendly curiosity, but after the first great aria it was clear that her intimate friends could safely accept the congratulations of her more distant acquaintances. In the gallery the childish face of little Fräulein Fanny Ringeiser could be seen glowing with delight, and the regular opera-goers in the upper tiers smiled knowingly at their little friend. They all knew that Fanny, although she was only the daughter of a shop assistant on the Mariahilferstrasse, belonged to the beloved singer's inner circle, had often been invited to parties at her house and had been secretly in love with the dead Prince. In the interval, Fanny explained to her many male and female friends that Baron von Leisenbohg had suggested to Kläre the idea of choosing the Queen of the Night for her first part — thinking that the dark costume would be most in harmony with her state of mind.

The Baron himself took his usual stall, the corner seat on the gangway in the first row, and acknowledged the greetings of his acquaintances with a cordial, but almost melancholy, smile. Her mind was full of many memories that evening. He had first met Kläre ten years ago. At that time he was making himself responsible for the artistic training of a slim young lady with red hair, and had looked in one evening for a performance at the Eisenstein School of Singing, in which his protégée was making her first public performance as Mignon. On that same evening he saw and heard Kläre who was singing Philine in the same scene. He was then twenty-five years old, independent, and impulsive. He took no further interest in Mignon, made Frau Natalie Eisenstein introduce him to Philine after the performance and told her that his heart, his fortune, and his influence with the management of the Opera were all at her disposal. At that time Kläre was living with her mother, the widow of a higher official in the Post Office, and was in love with a young medical student, with whom she often went to tea in his room out in the Alser district. She rejected the Baron's impetuous proposals, but Leisenbohg's homage inclined her to a more complaisant attitude of mind, and she became the medical student's mistress. She made no secret of this to the Baron, who returned to his red-haired protégée, but pursued his acquaintance with Kläre. On all festivals that gave him any sort of excuse, he sent her presents of flowers and sweets, and from time to time he paid a formal call at the house of the postal official's widow.

In the autumn of that year, Kläre got her first engagement at Detmold. Baron von Leisenbohg, who at that time still had a post under the Government, took advantage of his first Christmas leave to pay Kläre a visit in her new abode. He knew that the medical student had become a doctor and had married in September, and he was tempted to hope once more. But Kläre, with her usual straightforwardness, told the Baron immediately he arrived that she had established tender relations with the tenor at the Court Theatre: thus it befell therefore, that the only memories Leisenbohg could carry away from Detmold were of a platonic stroll in the little public park, and a supper at the theatre restaurant with a few fellow artists of both sexes. In spite of this, he made several more journeys to Detmold, took great pleasure in Kläre's devotion to her art and the unmistakable progress that she made, and, moreover, hoped for better luck next season, for which the tenor

was under contract to sing in Hamburg. But that year, too, he was disappointed, as Kläre felt obliged to yield to the solicitations of a Dutch merchant in a large way of business, by the name of Louis Verhajen.

When Kläre, in her third season, was offered an engagement at the Dresden Court Theatre, in spite of his youth the Baron gave up a very promising official career and migrated to Dresden. He spent every evening with Kläre and her mother, who had always known how to maintain the most admirable detachment in all her relations with her daughter, and began to hope again. Unfortunately the Dutchman had the unpleasant habit whenever he wrote of announcing his arrival for the following day, and informing his beloved that she was surrounded by an army of spies, and threatening her with every variety of painful death, if she was not faithful to him. As he never came, and Kläre was gradually getting into an extremely nervous state, Leisenbohg decided to end the business at any cost, and went to Detmold to try to see the man personally. To his amazement, the Dutchman explained that he had sent these passionate and threatening missives purely from a sense of chivalry, and that he would really be exceedingly relieved to be freed from any further responsibility. In high satisfaction Leisenbohg took the train back to Dresden, and informed Kläre of the agreeable outcome of the interview. She thanked him warmly, but avoided the Baron's attempts at tender advances in so decided a manner that he was quite taken aback. After a few brief and searching questions she finally admitted that during his absence no less a person than Prince Kajetan had conceived a violent passion for her and had sworn to do himself an injury if she did not take pity on him. So, of course, she had had at last to give way, to avoid plunging the ruling family and the nation into the most unspeakable grief.

With a heart that showed signs of breaking, Leisenbohg left the city and went back to Vienna. Here he began to pull wires, and it was not a little due to his persistent efforts that Kläre received an offer from the Vienna Opera for the very next year. After a successful tour, she took up her engagement in October, and the Baron's magnificent basket of flowers, that she found on the evening when she first entered her dressingroom, seemed like the expression of an entreaty and a hope. But her generous admirer had once again to endure the experience of having come too late. The fair-haired gentleman who played for her while she had been practising during the last few weeks — he was pretty well known as a song composer — had acquired rights over her which she was bound in honour to respect. Since then seven years had passed. The accompanist had been succeeded by Herr Klemens von Rhodoewyl, the dashing gentleman-jockey; Herr von Rhodoewyl was followed by Vincenz Klaudi, the conductor, who often sang the music of the operas he was conducting, so loudly that the singers could not be heard; after him came the Count von AlbanRattony, who had gambled away his Hungarian estates at cards, but had made up for it by winning a castle in Lower Austria; the next was Herr Edgar Wilhelm, who wrote ballet librettos (for which highly paid composers wrote the music), tragedies produced at his own expense at the Jansch theatre, and poems printed in elegant type in the stupidest kind of Court journal. Herr Wilhelm was succeeded by a gentleman named Amandus Meier, who had nothing to recommend him but his age, which was nineteen, and his appearance, which was charming, and whose sole possession was a fox-terrier that could stand on its head; after Herr Meier came the best dressed man in the kingdom — Prince Richard Bedenbruck.

Kläre had never made any secret of these affairs. Hers was, and continued to be, a simple bourgeois household in which the master changed from time to time. Her public popularity was extraordinary. In higher circles she was looked on with not a little favour for going to Mass every Sunday, confessing twice a month, wearing on her bosom as an amulet a picture of the Madonna blessed by the Pope, and never going to bed without saying her prayers. There were few bazaars at which she was not in charge of a stall, and ladies of the aristocracy, as well as those of Jewish financial circles, were delighted to be able to offer their wares under the same marquee as Kläre. She bestowed fascinating smiles on youthful enthusiasts of both sexes who

waited for her by the stage door. She distributed her bouquets among the patient crowd, and once, when she had left the flowers behind her in her dressing-room, she said in that refreshing Viennese of hers that seemed to suit her looks so well: “Oh God, I’ve left the stuff up in my room; come tomorrow afternoon, my dears, if you still want any.” Then she jumped into her carriage, put her head out of the window, and cried as she drove off: “You’ll get some coffee, too!”

Fanny Ringeiser had been one of the few who had had the nerve to accept this invitation. Kläre fell into a chaffing conversation with her, enquired about her family with all the affability of an archduchess, and found the ingenuous and adoring girl’s chatter so much to her liking that she asked her to come again soon. Fanny did so, and it came about that she soon achieved a position of importance in the singer’s household; and she managed to keep it, mainly because, though Kläre was very ready with her confidences, Fanny never fully confided in her in return. In the course of years, Fanny had received a succession of proposals, mostly from the young sons of the Mariahilferstrasse shopkeepers with whom she used to go to dances. But she rejected them all, owing to the fact that she fell, with irrevocable regularity, in love with Kläre’s admirer for the time being.

Kläre had in fact loved Prince Bedenbruck just as faithfully but much more passionately than his predecessors, and Leisenbohg, who in spite of his innumerable disappointments had never given up hope, had begun to be seriously afraid that the happiness he had yearned for these ten long years would never blossom now. Whenever he saw anyone falling out of her favour, he had always discharged his mistress so as to be ready for all contingencies, and at any moment. And he did so after Prince Richard’s sudden death; but, for the first time, more from habit than conviction. For Kläre’s grief seemed so boundless that everyone could not help believing that she had finished for ever with the delights of love. She drove out to the cemetery every day and laid flowers on the grave of the departed. She flung away all her gay clothes and locked up her jewelry in the innermost drawers of her writing-table. Much serious expostulation was needed to dissuade her from leaving the stage for ever.

After her first reappearance, which had gone off so brilliantly, her life, outwardly at any rate, resumed its wonted course. Her original circle of less intimate acquaintances gathered round once more. The music critic, Bernhard Feuerstein, appeared, his coat stained with spinach or tomato, in accordance with what he might have had for lunch, and, to Kläre’s unconcealed delight, abused her fellow artists of both sexes, including the Director himself. She allowed Prince Richard’s two cousins, Lucius and Christian, Bedenbrucks of the other line, to make love to her in their usual light-hearted but respectful way; a gentleman from the French Embassy and a young Czech pianist were brought to see her, and on June 10th she drove to the races again for the first time. But, as Prince Lucius, who had a touch of poetry about him, expressed it, only her soul was awake, her heart was still sunk in slumber. It was true that if one of her younger or older friends ventured the slightest suggestion that there were such things as love and passion in the world, every trace of a smile vanished from her face, she stared darkly in front of her, and from time to time raised her hand in a strange gesture of repulsion which seemed intended to apply to all men, and for ever.

In the latter half of the month of June it so happened that a singer from the north, named Sigurd Oise, sang Tristan at the Opera. His voice was clear and powerful, though it was not really first-rate; he was almost a giant in stature, though inclining towards stoutness, and, in repose, his face was lacking in individual expression; but as soon as he began to sing, his steel-grey eyes flashed with a sort of secret inner light, and his voice and look seemed to reduce everybody, more especially women, to a state of ecstatic admiration.

Kläre sat in the theatre-box with some of her fellow artists who were not singing that night. She alone seemed to remain unmoved. Next morning Sigurd Ölse was introduced to her in the manager’s office. She

spoke kindly, but quite coldly about his performance on the previous evening. The same afternoon he called upon her, though she had not invited him to do so. Leisenbohg and Fanny Ringeiser were present and Sigurd drank tea with them. He spoke of his parents who were fisher-folk living in a little Norwegian village, of the marvellous discovery of his talent as a singer by a passing Englishman who had landed from a white yacht in that far-distant fjord; of his wife, an Italian, who had died on the Atlantic Ocean during their honeymoon and who had been buried at sea. After he had taken his departure the others stayed for some time in silence. Fanny stared gravely into her empty tea cup, Kläre sat down at the piano with her elbows on the closed keyboard, while the Baron sank into a silent and anxious meditation as to why, during the account of Sigurd's honeymoon, Kläre had omitted that strange gesture by which, since the Prince's death, she indicated that any suggestion of passion or affection could have no place whatever in her future life.

The next parts that Sigurd Ölse sang were Siegfried and Lohengrin. On each occasion Kläre sat in her box and made no sign. But the singer, whose only other acquaintance was the Norwegian Ambassador, appeared at Kläre's house every afternoon; Fräulein Fanny Ringeiser was usually there, and the Baron von Leisenbohg always.

On June 27th he sang Tristan for the last time. Kläre sat in the theatre-box and made no sign. The next day she drove with Fanny to the cemetery and laid a gigantic cross on the Prince's grave; and in the evening she gave a party in honour of the singer who was to leave Vienna on the morrow.

Her circle of friends was present in full strength. The passion that Sigurd had conceived for Kläre was obvious to everyone; as his custom was, he was voluble and excited. He mentioned incidentally that while on the ship crossing to the Continent an Arabian lady, married to a Russian Grand Duke, had read his hand and prophesied that the immediate future would be the most fateful period in his life. He believed firmly in this prophecy, and, indeed, superstition seemed to him something more than a means of exciting interest. He also said it was generally known that last year, on landing in New York, where he had gone to fulfil an engagement, that every day — that every hour in fact — notwithstanding the enormous fine involved, he boarded a ship for Europe simply because a black cat had walked between his legs on the gangway. He had certainly every reason to believe in the secret connections between such inexplicable omens and the fates of men. One evening at the Covent Garden Theatre in London, before going on the stage he had omitted to repeat a certain magic formula he had received from his grandmother, and his voice had suddenly failed him. One night a winged genius in pink tights had appeared to him in a dream and predicted the death of his favourite barber, and sure enough the unfortunate man was found hanged the next morning. Moreover, he always carried about with him a short but highly significant missive which had been handed to him at a spiritualist séance in Brussels by the spirit of the dead singer, Cornelia Lujan, and contained a prophecy, in fluent Portuguese, that he was destined to become the greatest singer in the Old and New Worlds.

All these experiences he related that evening; and when the spirit letter (written on rose-coloured paper manufactured by Glienwood & Co.) was passed from hand to hand, the effect on the company was profound and universal. Kläre did not move a muscle, but merely nodded indifferently once or twice. In spite of this Leisenbohg's anxiety grew more and more acute. To his penetrating eyes the signs of threatening danger grew ever more ominous. Worst of all, Sigurd, like all Kläre's previous lovers, conceived an extraordinary liking for him during supper, invited him to his house on the Molde-Fjord, and ended by addressing him as "du." Moreover, Fanny trembled all over when Sigurd spoke a word to her, her colour came and went when he looked at her with his great steel-grey eyes, and when he spoke of his approaching departure she burst openly into tears. But Kläre remained perfectly quiet and serious. She barely returned Sigurd's burning glances, she spoke to him no more eagerly than to the rest, and when he at last kissed her hand and then

looked up at her with eyes that seemed full of prayers and promises and desperation, her own remained veiled and her expression unmoved. Leisenbohg observed all this with suspicion and anxiety. But when the party came to an end and all the guests departed, something unexpected happened that took the Baron completely by surprise. He was the last of all to take Kläre's hand in farewell, and hurried to depart; but she held his hand fast and whispered: "Come back again." He thought he could not have heard her rightly. But she pressed his hand again, and, with her lips quite close to his ear, repeated, "Come back again; I shall expect you in an hour."

In a state bordering on ecstasy he went out with the rest. He and Fanny accompanied Sigurd to his hotel, and as though from a far distance he heard the tenor raving about Kläre. Then he took Fanny Ringeiser back through the silent streets, in soft cool night air, to Mariahilferstrasse, and he saw, as though through a mist, her girlish cheeks wet with foolish tears. Then he got into a cab and drove up to Kläre's door. He saw the light glimmering through the curtains of her bedroom, he saw her shadow glide past, her head appeared in the gap between the curtain and the window, and she nodded to him. He had not been dreaming: she was waiting for him.

Next morning Baron von Leisenbohg went for a ride in the Prater. He felt young and happy. In the late fulfilment of his passion there seemed to be some deeper meaning. His experience of the past night had been the most marvellous surprise — and yet, again, it was nothing but the climax and the inevitable conclusion of his relations with Kläre hitherto. He now felt that it could not have happened otherwise, and fell to making plans for the immediate and more distant future. "How long will she stay on the stage?" he wondered... "Perhaps for a few years. Then, but not until then, we will get married. We will live together somewhere in the country not far from Vienna, perhaps in St. Veit or in Lainz. I will buy a small house there, or build one to her liking. We shall live a rather retired life, but often take long trips abroad... to Spain, Egypt or India...." Thus he dreamed, as he let his horse canter across the meadows towards the hay-stall. Then he trotted back into the main avenue and got into his carriage at the cross-roads. He told his coachman to stop at Fossatti's and sent Kläre a bouquet of beautiful dark roses. He breakfasted at home alone, as his custom was, in his house on the Schwarzenbergplatz, and when he had finished he lay down on the divan. He was filled with the most fervent longing for Kläre. What meaning had all the other women had for him?... They had served to pass the time, nothing more. And he felt a day would come when Kläre too would say to him: "What were all the others to me? You are the first and only one I ever loved...." And while he lay on the divan with closed eyes, he let the whole succession of them glide past his inner vision. He was sure she had loved none of them before him — perhaps she had loved him always, and in each and all of them!...

The Baron then dressed himself and walked slowly through the familiar streets towards her house, as though to savour their first reunion for a few more seconds. There were a good many people about on the Ring, but still it was observable that the season was coming to an end. And Leisenbohg was glad that summer was there, that he could travel with Kläre and they could see the sea and the mountains together — indeed he had very nearly shouted aloud in his delight.

He stood before her house and looked up at her windows. The light of the afternoon sun was reflected from them and almost blinded him. He walked up the two flights of stairs to her door and rang. No one opened. He rang again. No one opened. Then Leisenbohg noticed that the door was padlocked. What did it mean? Had he made a mistake?... As a matter of fact there was no plate on her door, but opposite was the one he knew so well: "Lt. Colonel von Jeleskowitz."... There could be no doubt: this was her flat and it was shut up. He hurried down the stairs and flung open the door of the porter's lodge. The porter's wife was sitting in the half-

darkness on a bed, one child was peering up at the street through the small underground window, the other was blowing an unrecognisable tune on a comb.

"Is Fräulein Hell not at home?" asked the Baron.

The woman stood up. "No, Herr Baron, Fräulein Hell has gone away."

"What!" cried the Baron.... "Oh, yes, of course," he added quickly. "She went about three o'clock, didn't she?"

"No, Herr Baron, about eight o'clock this morning."

"Where did she go?... I mean did she go straight..." he was talking at random... "did she go straight to Dresden?"

"No, Herr Baron; she left no address. She said she would write and say where she was."

"Ah... yes — yes... of course. Thank you very much."

He hurried away and went out into the street: unconsciously he looked back at the house. The evening sunlight shining in those windows looked very different now! And the sultry summer evening lay like a pall of oppression over the city. Kläre had gone?

... Why?... Had she fled from him? What did it mean?... His first thought was to go to the Opera House. But it occurred to him that the vacation began the day after to-morrow, and that Kläre was not singing the last two days. Then he went to 76 Mariahilferstrasse where the Ringeisers lived. An elderly cook opened the door to him and looked at the well-dressed visitor with a certain mistrust. He asked her to call Frau Ringeiser.

"Is Fräulein Fanny at home?" he asked in a tone of excitement that he could no longer control.

"I beg your pardon?" said Frau Ringeiser sharply.

He introduced himself.

"Ah, of course," said Frau Ringeiser. "Please come in, Herr Baron."

He remained standing in the hall and asked once more:

"Is Fräulein Fanny not at home?"

"But the Herr Baron must come in." Leisenbohg had to follow her, and found himself in a dark low-ceilinged room with furniture covered in blue velvet and rep window curtains of the same colour. "No," said Frau Ringeiser, "Fanny is not at home. Fräulein Hell has taken her away for a holiday trip."

"Where?" asked the Baron, and stared at a photograph of Kläre that stood on the piano in a gold frame.

"I don't know where," said Frau Ringeiser. "Fräulein Hell was here at eight o'clock this morning and begged me to let Fanny go with her.... And she begged so nicely that I could not say No."

"But where have they gone — where have they gone?" persisted Leisenbohg.

"That I can't tell you. Fanny is going to telegraph as soon as Fräulein Hell has made up her mind where she is going to stay. Perhaps to-morrow or the day after."

"Ah," said Leisenbohg, and dropped on to a kind of cane stool in front of the piano. He was silent for a few moments, then he suddenly stood up, shook hands with Frau Ringeiser, asked her to excuse him for having disturbed her, and went slowly down the dark staircase of the old house.

He shook his head. She had indeed been careful... more careful than was necessary.... She might have known that he would not come where he was not wanted.

"Where to now, Herr Baron?" asked the coachman, and Leisenbohg realised that he had been sitting in the open carriage, staring in front of him, for some minutes. And, following a sudden instinct, he answered: "Hotel Bristol."

Sigurd Ölse had not yet gone. He invited the Baron up to his rooms, greeted him eagerly and asked him to spend the last evening in Vienna in his company. Leisenbohg was much struck by the fact that Sigurd Ölse

was still actually in Vienna, and the singer's friendliness positively stirred him to tears. Sigurd began at once to talk about Kläre. He asked Leisenbohg to tell him all he knew about her — he knew that the Baron was her oldest and most faithful friend. So Leisenbohg sat down on one of his host's trunks and began to speak of Kläre. It did him good to be able to talk about her. He told the singer almost everything, except such matters as he felt bound in honour not to mention. Sigurd listened and appeared enraptured.

At supper the singer invited his friend to leave Vienna with him that very evening, and go with him to his estate near Molde. The Baron felt wonderfully comforted. He excused himself for the time being, but promised Ölse to visit him in the course of the summer.

They drove to the station together. "You will take me for a simpleton," said Sigurd, "but I want to pass her window once again."

Leisenbohg threw a sidelong glance at him. Was this perhaps an attempt to make a fool of him, or was it a final proof of the singer's honesty?... As they went by Kläre's house, Sigurd flung a kiss at the closed windows. Then he said: "Say good-bye for me once more."

Leisenbohg nodded. "I will give her your message when she comes back."

Sigurd looked at him in amazement.

"As a matter of fact she has gone away," Leisenbohg continued. "She went off early this morning — without a word to anyone. It is a habit of hers," he added, untruthfully.

"Gone away?" repeated Sigurd, and sank into thought.

Then they were both silent.

Before the departure of the train they embraced like old friends.

That night the Baron wept as he lay in bed, more bitterly than he had done since his childhood. The hour of delight that he had spent with Kläre seemed to him beset by gloom and terror. There had been, he thought, a gleam of madness in her eyes last night. Now he understood. He had obeyed her summons too soon. The shadow of Prince Bedenbruck still had power over her, and Leisenbohg felt that he had possessed Kläre only to lose her for ever.

He wandered about Vienna for a few days without knowing what to do with his days and nights: everything that used to occupy his time — the newspapers, bridge and riding, had become completely indifferent to him. He realised that the meaning of his whole existence depended on Kläre, and even that his relations with other women had their being only as reflections of his passion for her. An eternal grey mist seemed to hang over the city; the people to whom he spoke had hushed voices and stared at him in a strange, almost treacherous way. One evening he drove to the station and almost mechanically took a ticket to Ischl. There he met acquaintances who asked him unsuspectingly for news of Kläre; he answered in an irritable and offensive tone, and had to fight a duel with one man who did not interest him in the least. He went nonchalantly into the field, heard the bullet whistle past his ear, fired in the air and left Ischl half an hour afterwards. He travelled to Tyrol, the Engadine and the Bernese Oberland, and to Lake Geneva, swam, crossed mountain passes, climbed mountains, and remembered nothing from one day to the next.

One day he received a telegram that had been sent on from Vienna. He opened it with feverish fingers. In it were these words: "If you are my friend, keep your word and come to me quickly, for I need a friend. Sigurd Ölse." Leisenbohg did not doubt for a moment that the contents of this telegram must have some sort of connection with Kläre. He packed as quickly as possible and left Aix, where he then happened to be, at the earliest opportunity. He travelled straight through to Hamburg via Munich, and took the boat via Stavanger to

Molde, where he arrived on a fine summer evening. The journey had seemed interminable, and the beauties of the scenery had left him quite unmoved. Moreover, latterly he had not been able to remember Kläre's voice when she sang, or even her features. It seemed like a year, ten years, since he had left Vienna. But when he saw Sigurd standing on the shore in a white flannel suit and white cap, he felt as though he had seen him only the evening before. And, dishevelled as he was, he smilingly returned Sigurd's greeting from where he was standing on the deck, and walked cheerfully down the gangway.

"I thank you a thousand times for coming so promptly," said Sigurd; and then he added simply: "I'm done for."

The Baron eyed him. Sigurd looked very pale and the hair on his temples had grown astonishingly grey. Over his arm he was carrying a green rug of dimly iridescent material.

"What is it? What has happened?" asked Leisenbohg with a fixed smile.

"I will tell you the whole story," said Sigurd Ölse. It struck the Baron that Sigurd's voice was less resonant than it had been. They drove in a small carriage along the lovely avenue along the shore of the blue sea. Both were silent. Leisenbohg did not dare to ask a question. He stared vacantly at the water which was almost motionless. The strange and (as it proved) impossible idea of counting the ripples came into his mind; then he looked up into the sky and it seemed as though the stars were dropping slowly down to earth. At last it also occurred to him that a singer, by name Kläre Hell, was wandering somewhere about in the wide world — a fact which did not matter much. Then the carriage stopped with a jerk before a simple white house entirely surrounded by trees and foliage. In the evening they dined upon a verandah that looked out upon the sea. A servant with a stern, and, as he poured out the wine, almost a menacing expression, waited on them. The distant horizon slept under the clear northern light.

"Well?" asked Leisenbohg, in a sudden burst of impatience.

"I am a lost man," said Sigurd Ölse, and stared in front of him.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Leisenbohg in a toneless voice, 'and what can I do for you? "he added mechanically.

"Not much. I don't know yet," and he looked beyond the tablecloth, the balustrade, the garden and the garden fence, the road, and the sea into the far distance.

Leisenbohg felt numb within him... all manner of notions flashed across his mind... what was going to happen?... was Kläre dead?... had Sigurd murdered her?... thrown her into the sea?... Or was Sigurd dead?... No, that was impossible — there he was sitting opposite.... But why didn't he speak?... and suddenly, in an access of terror, Leisenbohg burst out, "Where is Kläre?"

The singer turned slowly towards him. His rather fleshy face began to light up with a sort of inner glow and seemed to smile, unless it was the moonlight playing over it. In any case, at that moment, it seemed to Leisenbohg that the man sitting near him leaning back in his chair with his hands in his pockets and his legs outstretched under the table, and gazing at him with veiled eyes, looked exactly like a Pierrot. The green shawl hung down over the balustrade of the verandah and at that moment seemed to the Baron so like an old acquaintance.... But what on earth had this ridiculous old shawl to do with him? Was he dreaming perhaps?... he was in Molde; it was all very strange; if he had been sensible he ought really to have telegraphed to the singer from Aix: "What is the matter? What do you want me to do for you, Pierrot?" And he suddenly repeated his earlier question only in a much politer and calmer tone: "Where is Kläre?"

The singer nodded several times. "Yes," he said, "it is something to do with her, of course. Are you a friend of mine?"

Leisenbohg nodded, he felt slightly chilly; a light wind was blowing in from the sea. "I am your friend.

What do you want of me?"

"Do you remember the evening I left Vienna, Baron, when we had supper together at the Bristol, and you went with me to the station?"

Leisenbohg nodded once more.

"You had no idea, of course, that Kläre Hell was leaving Vienna in that same train?"

Leisenbohg let his head sink heavily on his chest....

"Nor had I," went on Sigurd. "I saw Kläre for the first time next morning at the station where we stopped for breakfast. She was sitting with Fanny Ringeiser in the dining-room drinking coffee. Her demeanour led me to suppose that this meeting was a fortunate accident. It was not an accident at all."

"Go on," said the Baron, looking at the green shawl which was moving slightly.

"Later on, of course, she confessed that it was not an accident. From that morning we all stayed together, Kläre, Fanny and I. We settled down by one of your enchanting little Austrian lakes, in a charming house between the shore and the forest, quite by ourselves. We were very happy."

He spoke so slowly that Leisenbohg thought he was going mad.

"Why did he send for me?" he thought. "What does he want of me? Had she confessed? What's the matter with him? Why is he staring at me like that?... Why am I sitting here at Molde on a verandah with a Pierrot? Can it be all a dream after all? Perhaps I am still asleep in Kläre's arms. Perhaps that night of ours has not yet ended after all."... And he unconsciously opened his eyes wide.

"Will you avenge me?" said Sigurd, suddenly.

"Avenge you? Whatever for? What has happened?" asked the Baron, and his words sounded as if they came from a distance.

"Because she has destroyed me, and I am a lost man."

"Tell me all about it," said Leisenbohg in a hard, dry voice.

"Fanny Ringeiser was with us," Sigurd went on. "She is a good girl, isn't she?"

"Yes, she is a good girl," answered Leisenbohg, and all at once he saw a dim room with furniture covered in blue velvet and rep curtains where, several hundred years before, he had spoken to Fanny's mother.

"She is rather a stupid girl, is she not?"

"I believe she is," answered the Baron.

"I am sure of it," answered Sigurd. "She did not realise how happy we were." And he was silent for some while.

"Go on," said Leisenbohg, and waited.

"One morning Kläre was still asleep," began Sigurd afresh. "She always slept late into the morning. But I had gone for a walk into the forest. Suddenly Fanny came running up behind me: 'Fly, Herr Ölse, before it is too late; leave this place, for you are in dreadful danger!' Strangely enough, to begin with she absolutely refused to say any more. But I persisted and at last found out what kind of danger it was that she believed to be threatening me. You see, she believed that I could still be saved or she would certainly have told me nothing!"

The green shawl on the balustrade bellied out like a sail, and the lamp flickered a little on the table.

"What did Fanny tell you?" asked Leisenbohg in a rasping tone.

"Do you remember the evening," asked Sigurd, "when we were all at Kläre's house? On the next day Kläre drove out with Fanny to the cemetery, and on the Prince's grave she confided the dreadful secret to her friend."

"The dreadful secret...?" stammered the Baron.

“Yes. You know how the Prince died? He was thrown from his horse and lingered for an hour.”

“I know.”

“Nobody was with him but Kläre.”

“That also I know.”

“He would see no one but her, and on his deathbed he uttered a curse.”

“A curse?”

“A curse. ‘Kläre,’ said the Prince, ‘do not forget me. I shall have no peace in the grave if you forget me.’— ‘I will never forget you,’ replied Kläre. ‘Do you swear you will never forget me?’— ‘I swear it.’— ‘Kläre, I love you and I must die!’”

“Who is it speaking?” cried the Baron.

“I am,” said Sigurd; “I am telling you what Fanny said; Fanny told me what Kläre said, and Kläre told her what the Prince said. Don’t you understand?”

Leisenbohg listened with strained attention: it seemed as though he could hear the voice of the dead Prince ringing out from the triply-sealed coffin into the night.

“‘Kläre, I love you, and I must die! You are so young, and I must die.... And after me another man will come.... I know it will be so, another man will hold you in his arms and be happy with you... he must not be — he shall not be — I lay my curse on him, do you hear, Kläre? I curse him! — The first man that kisses those lips and holds that body in his arms when I am gone shall go down to hell! Kläre, Heaven hears the curses of dying men. Beware — and let him beware; he shall go down to hell in madness, misery and death! Woe be to that man — woe!’”

Sigurd, from whose mouth the dead man’s voice thundered out, had got up from his chair and stood, a tall heavy figure in his white flannel suit, staring into the clear night. The green shawl slipped down from the balustrade into the garden. An icy chill came over the Baron; he felt as though his whole body was growing stiff; he would gladly have cried out, but though he opened his mouth wide no sound came... in a flash he was back again in Frau Eisenstein, the singing teacher’s, little room where he had seen Kläre for the first time. On the stage stood a Pierrot, and shouted out: ‘With this curse on his lips Prince Bedenbruck died, and the unhappy man in whose arms she lay, the wretch upon whom the curse must be fulfilled, is I — I!’”

Then the stage collapsed with a loud crash and sank before Leisenbohg’s eyes into the sea. But he, without a word, fell backwards with his chair, like a marionette.

Sigurd leapt up and shouted for help. Two servants came, picked up the unconscious man and laid him out in an armchair that stood beside the table; one of them went for a doctor, and the other brought some water and vinegar. Sigurd rubbed the Baron’s forehead and temples, but he did not stir. Then the doctor came and began his examination. It did not last long. When he had finished he said: “This gentleman is dead.”

Sigurd Ölse was much upset, asked the doctor to make the necessary arrangements and left the verandah. He walked through the drawing-room, went upstairs, entered his bedroom, lit a lamp and hurriedly wrote the following words: “Kläre! I found your telegram waiting for me in Molde where I had fled without stopping on the way. I will confess that I did not believe you; I thought that you were trying to set my mind at rest by a lie. Forgive me; I no longer doubt you. Baron von Leisenbohg has been here. I asked him to come, but I did not question him because as an honourable man he would have had to lie. I had an ingenious idea. I told him about the dead Prince’s curse. The effect was amazing. The Baron fell backwards as he sat, and died on the spot.”

Sigurd paused for a moment, looked very serious and seemed to be reflecting. Then he took up his stand in the middle of the room and began to sing. At first his voice sounded timid and subdued, but gradually it grew

clearer and rang out strong and splendid into the night — so powerfully at last that it seemed full of the thunder of the sea. A satisfied smile spread over Sigurd's features and he breathed a deep sigh of relief. Once more he sat down at the writing-table, and added the following words to his letter: "Darling Kläre! Forgive me — all is well again. I shall be with you in three days...

THE STRANGER



WHEN ALBERT AWOKE AT SIX O'CLOCK IN THE morning the bed beside him was empty and his wife was gone. On the small table lay a note in her handwriting. Albert reached out for it and read the following words: "My dear, I woke up earlier than you. Good-bye. I am going. Whether I shall ever come back I do not know. Farewell. Katherina."

Albert let the note drop on to the white coverlet and shook his head. Whether she came back to-day or not — it did not really matter. Neither the tone nor the contents of the letter surprised him. It had merely come a little earlier than he expected. His happiness had lasted just a fortnight. Well, he was ready.

Slowly he got out of bed, put on his dressing gown, walked across to the window and opened it. The city of Innsbruck lay at his feet in the peaceful still morning light, and far away a confusion of rocky heights towered up into the blue light. Albert folded his arms and stared into the distance. He reflected that full foreknowledge, and even a set determination, did not lighten the burden of man's fate, though they made it easier to face. He hesitated for a while. And yet what had he to wait for now? Would it not be best to make an end at once? Was not the curiosity that tortured him a betrayal of his resolution? His fate must be fulfilled. It had been decided two long years ago at a dance when he felt the breath of her mysterious lips brush past his cheeks.

He remembered how that night he had gone back home with his friend Vincent. He must think of everything that Vincent then had told him; and the gentle tones of that long-distant warning rang once more in his ears. Vincent knew all sorts of things about Katherina and her family. The father had been colonel of an artillery regiment, ennobled during the Bosnian campaign, and had fallen by a rebel's bullet. Her brother had been a lieutenant of cavalry, and had quickly gone through his inheritance; later on the mother had sacrificed her whole fortune to save her son from disaster; but this did not serve him for long, and soon after the young officer shot himself.

About that time a Baron Maasburg, who passed for Katherina's betrothed, began his visits to the house.

This was attributed not merely to the poor circumstances of the family, which then came to light, but also to a remarkable scene that had taken place during the funeral. Katherina had fallen sobbing into the arms of a brother officer of the dead youth whom she did not know, just as though he had been a friend of hers, or her fiancé. A year later she was seized by violent infatuation for the organist Banetti. He left Vienna before she had ever spoken to him. One morning she told her mother that she had dreamt that Banetti had come into her room, played a fugue of Bach on the piano, then fallen backwards on to the floor, dead, while the ceiling opened and the piano floated up to Heaven. On the very same day they heard that Banetti had thrown himself from the church tower of a little Lombard town, into the graveyard, and was found dead lying at the foot of a cross.

Soon afterwards Katherina began to show signs of melancholia, which gradually increased to a state of utter prostration; only her mother's insistent opposition and her firm faith in Katherina's recovery prevented the doctor from sending her to an institution. For a whole year Katherina spent the daytime alone and in silence; but at night she sometimes got out of bed and sang simple songs as she used to do. Gradually, and to the doctor's great astonishment, she awoke out of her melancholy. She seemed to have come back to life, and even to pleasure. Soon she began to accept invitations, at first only among a few friends; then the circle of her acquaintance began to widen, and when Albert got to know her at the White Cross Ball she seemed to him so

particularly self-possessed that he hardly felt able to believe his friend's stories on their way home.

Albert von Webeling, who had not previously gone about the world much, found it quite easy, thanks to the reputation of his family, and his position as Under-Secretary in a Ministry, to get admittance to Katherina's circle. Every meeting deepened his attraction to her. Katherina had quite a simple way with her, but her height, and more especially her characteristic — almost queenly — way of inclining her head when she listened to anyone, gave her a distinction all her own. She did not say much, and when she was in company her eyes often seemed as though they were looking into a distance that others could not reach. She treated younger men with a certain indifference, and much preferred to talk to older men of rank or reputation. And when another year had passed after she had made Albert's acquaintance, rumour betrothed her to a Count Rummingshaus who had just come back from a journey of exploration in Thibet and Turkestan. Then Albert knew that the day on which Katherina gave another man her hand in marriage would be the last day of his life, and he, whose existence had flowed so peacefully for thirty years, at one stroke became acquainted with all the perils and the madness into which a violent passion can drive the most cautious of men. He was utterly convinced of his unworthiness of Katherina. He had a moderate income and could have lived a very comfortable life as a bachelor, but he could not expect wealth from either side of his family. A secure, but certainly not a very significant, career stood before him. He dressed with the greatest care, without ever looking really smart, talked with a certain cleverness, though he never had anything special to say, and everyone was glad, though not overjoyed, to see him. And so he felt that a creature like Katherina, mysterious and seemingly from another world, would have to demean herself far if he were to win her, and that in any case it was her privilege to make him pay highly for a happiness that he did not deserve. But as he was ready to make any sacrifice, he gradually began to think he was growing worthy of her. One morning he heard that the Count had gone away to Galicia without having declared himself, and with a determination that was quite unlike his usual self he considered the right moment had come, and went off to see Katherina.

How far away that hour seemed now!

He saw before him the long low-vaulted room on the Schottenhof, with its old well-polished furniture; he saw the solitary dark red armchair standing in the window; the piano with some music above the open keyboard; the round mahogany table and on it the album bound in mother-of-pearl and the card tray of Alt-Meissner porcelain. And he remembered how he had looked down into the broad square which was just then full of people coming out of the Palm Sunday Mass in the Schotten Church opposite. While the bells were ringing, Katherina and her mother came out of the next room and were not so astonished at his visit as he really expected. She listened to him kindly and accepted his proposal without much emotion, as though he had come to invite her to a ball. The mother, wearing the continuously benevolent smile of those hard of hearing, sat silent in the corner of the sofa, and from time to time raised her small black silk fan to her ear. During the whole conversation in that cool room, so full of sunlit quiet, Albert had the sensation that he had come to a place that for a long time had been ravaged by violent storms, and now breathed a great longing for peace. And when, later on, he walked down the grey staircase, he had no blissful sensation of a desire fulfilled, but merely the consciousness that he had entered upon a wonderful, indeed, but uncertain and dark epoch of his existence. And, as on that Sunday morning, he wandered from street to street, through gardens and avenues, with the sky of spring above him, and so many gay and careless people passed him by, he felt that thenceforward he belonged to them no more, that a destiny of another and a stranger kind had begun to rule him.

Every evening he had sat up there in that vaulted room. Sometimes Katherina would sing in a pleasant but almost wholly expressionless voice, simple, mostly Italian, folk-songs, which he accompanied on the piano.

Then he would often stand with her at the window until late in the evening looking down into the quiet square, where the trees were growing green and beginning to blossom. On fine afternoons he constantly met her in the Belvedere garden: she had usually been sitting there for some time, watching the children play. When she saw him coming she would get up, and then they walked together up and down the sunny gravel paths. In the early days he often told her about his former life, his boyhood in his parents' house at Gratz, his student days in Vienna, his holidays in the summer, and as he searched his memory he was only surprised how shadowy and formless his earlier life now seemed. Perhaps this was partly because Katherina did not show the slightest interest in all these things.

Strange things happened, that might be without importance, but at any rate were never explained. One day, for instance, about noon, Albert met his betrothed on the Stephansplatz in the company of an elegant gentleman dressed in mourning, whom he had never seen before. Albert stopped short, but Katherina greeted him coolly, and without more ado walked on with the strange man. Albert followed her for a little, the gentleman got into a carriage that was waiting for him at a street corner and drove off. Katherina went home. When Albert asked her that evening who the man was, she looked at him with astonishment, uttered a Polish name he had never heard before and departed to her own room for the rest of the evening. Another time, one evening, she kept him waiting and waiting and never came. At last she appeared, as ten o'clock was striking, with a bunch of wild flowers in hand, and told him she had been into the country and gone to sleep in a field. She threw the flowers out of the window. Once she went to the Künstlerhaus with Albert and stood with him for a long time in front of a picture representing a green hilly landscape with white clouds above it. A few days afterward she talked about the place, as though she had really wandered over those hills as a child and in the company of her dead brother. Albert at first thought she was not serious, but he gradually noticed that the picture had become for her a living part of her experience; and then he knew that his surprise was beginning to change into feelings of grief and horror. But as the essence of her slipped further from his grasp, the more despairingly insistent his desire cried out for her.

Sometimes he succeeded in making her speak of her youth. But all she described to him — stories of real events and confessions of far-off dreams — seemed to hover in the same dim radiance, so that Albert did not know who or what had most vividly impressed her: the organist who had thrown himself down from the church tower, the young Duke of Modena who had once ridden past her in the Prater, or a youth by Van Dyck whose picture she had seen as a girl in the Liechtenstein Gallery. And in that half-light of her being she seemed still to be reaching after unknown or uncertain purposes, and Albert suspected that he meant no more to her than someone who might offer her his arm for a turn round the room at a reception. And as he made every effort to extricate her from this hazy sort of existence, he began at last to feel that the narcotic breath of her personality had cast a spell on him; he was gradually thinking in her fashion, and even behaving as she did; he was beginning to deny the plain necessities of daily life.

It began by his buying things for their future housekeeping that far exceeded his means; and he sent his betrothed costly jewels. The day before his wedding he bought a small house in a garden suburb which had taken his fancy as he walked past it one day, and the same evening he gave her a gift of a deed transferring it to her absolute possession. But she took it all with the same friendliness and composure with which she had accepted his hand. She certainly thought him richer than he was. At the outset he had of course intended to talk to her about his financial position. He put it off from day to day because the words would not come; but finally the time arrived when he realised that any discussion of such matters was unnecessary. For when she spoke about her future, she did not do so like one who sees an appointed road leading into the distance: she did so as though all possibilities would be open to her then as before, and nothing in her behaviour suggested

any inward or outward obligation. So one day Albert knew that a happiness uncertain and short lay before him, but he also knew that what might happen to him when Katherina had disappeared would be devoid of any meaning. For an existence without her had become completely unthinkable for him, and it was his firm intention simply to leave the world as soon as he lost Katherina. In this certainty he found his only foothold in this time of confusion and desire, but it served him well.

On the morning when Albert fetched Katherina for the wedding, she was just as strange to him as on the evening when he had first got to know her. She became his without passion and without resistance. They travelled together in the mountains. They drove through summer-like valleys that broadened and then grew narrow; they walked on the sunny shores of rippling lakes and wandered on forgotten paths through whispering woodlands. They stood at many a window, looked down on to the silent streets of magic cities, and gazed beyond them along mysterious rivers towards the silent mountains over which pale clouds dissolved in mist. And they talked about the daily affairs of life like any other young couple, walked arm in arm, lingered in front of buildings and shop windows, made plans, smiled, clinked brimming glasses, and sank — cheek upon cheek — into happy sleep. But time and time again she left him, in some half-lit hotel dining-room that glimmered with all the horror of the unknown, or on some stone bench in a garden among people who were enjoying the fragrance of a lovely day, or in some lofty hall in front of the blackened portrait of a knight or a Madonna; and he never knew when she would come back, or whether she would come back at all. For, insistent and inevitable as the beating of his heart, was the feeling within him that nothing had changed since the first day, that she was as free as ever, while he was dedicated to her.

Thus it was that her disappearance early that morning after a fortnight's honeymoon and her strange letter had only shaken him; they had not really surprised him. To search for her would, he thought, be degrading to both of them. Who or whatever had taken her from him — a caprice, a dream, or a living person — was utterly indifferent to him. All he knew and all he needed to know was that she was no longer his. Perhaps it was really for the best that the inevitable had come so early. His fortune had been reduced to next to nothing by his purchase of the house, and they could not both live on his small salary. It would have been quite impossible for him to talk to her about economies and the ordinary cares of daily life. For an instant it flashed through his mind that he would leave her. His gaze fell on the coverlet on which lay her note. A fleeting idea came to him to write a brief word of explanation on the blank side of the paper. But he was perfectly well aware that such a message could have not the slightest interest for Katherina, and he dismissed the notion. He opened his valise, put his small revolver in his pocket, and decided to wander somewhere outside the city, and there, with decency and without inconvenience to anyone, accomplish his deed.

The clear dark-blue light of a hot morning of summer, come before its time, lay upon the city. Albert went straight out. He was scarcely a hundred yards from the hotel when he saw Katherina's figure in front of him. She held her grey silk parasol in her hand and was walking slowly along the street. Albert's first impulse was to turn off into another street, but a power that was stronger than all his resolutions and reflections forced him to follow her so as to make certain of what, a minute before, he believed he could face with indifference. He actually felt rather afraid that she might turn and discover him. She took the road to the *Hof* garden, and he kept himself at a careful distance. She had soon reached the *Hof* Church, the door of which stood open. She went in. Albert followed her after a few moments. He remained standing near the entrance in deep shadow. He watched Katherina walking slowly down the middle aisle between the dark statues of the heroes and queens. Suddenly she stopped. Albert moved from where he had been standing and slipped into a niche behind the great cenotaph of the emperor Maximilian that towers up in the centre of the Church. Katherina stood motionless before the statue of Theodoric. With his left arm supported on his sword, the bronze hero

gazed before him with eyes that seemed eternal. His attitude was one of royal weariness as though he were conscious at once of the greatness and the futility of his deeds, and as though all his pride were sinking into sadness.

Katherina stood before the statue and looked steadfastly into the face of the King of the Goths. Albert stayed a little while in his concealment, then he ventured forth. She must have heard his footsteps but she did not turn; she stood where she was as though spell-bound. People came into the church, foreigners with red guide books, and stood talking near her and behind her; she did not hear. Then for a time the place was quieter, but Katherina stood as before, herself like a statue in her immobility. Another quarter of an hour, and another, passed. Katherina did not stir.

Albert went. At the doorway he turned once more: and then he saw that Katherina had gone up to the statue and was touching the bronze foot with her lips. Albert hurried away, smiling. An idea came to him that seemed to stir his heart, and made him glad. He had something more to do for his beloved before he went away. He made his way to an art shop in the Bahnhofstrasse: there he enquired whether a naturalsized bronze reproduction of the Theodoric could be made. As accident would have it, just such a one had been finished a month before: the English lord who had ordered it was dead and his heirs refused to take it. Albert asked the price. It was a sum just about equalling the remainder of his fortune. Albert gave his Vienna address with exact instructions that a reliable agent of the firm was to be sent to superintend its erection in the garden of his villa. Then he departed, hurried through the city, took the road through the suburb of Wilten towards Igls, and shot himself in a small wood, just as the sun had reached the zenith.

Katherina did not return to Vienna until a few weeks after this occurrence. In the meantime Albert had been laid away in the family vault at Gratz. On the evening of her arrival Katherina stood for a while in the garden in front of the statue, which had been admirably placed under some tall trees. Then she went to her room and wrote a long letter to Verona, Poste Restante, to one Andrea Geraldini. Such (so he said) was the name of a gentleman who had followed her from the *Hof* Church when she left Theodoric the Great, and whose child she bore under her heart. Whether it was his right name she never knew; for she received no answer.

THE GREEK DANCING-GIRL



PEOPLE MAY SAY WHAT THEY LIKE: I DON'T BELIEVE that Frau Mathilde Samodeski died of heart failure; I know better. And I am not going inside the house from which they are to carry her out to-day to the rest for which she longed: I have no wish to see the man who knows as well as I do why she died, to shake his hand and say nothing.

I shall take another road: it means a long walk, but the autumn day is fine and still, and it does me good to be alone. I shall soon be standing by the garden-fence behind which I saw Mathilde for the last time in the spring. The shutters of the villa will all be closed, red leaves will be lying on the gravel path, and somewhere I shall see the glitter of white marble through the trees — the marble out of which the Greek dancing-girl was chiselled.

That evening is much in my mind to-day. It seems now almost like a dispensation that I decided at the last moment to accept the Wartenheimers' invitation, as in the course of the year I had so entirely lost my taste for social activities. Perhaps it was the warm breeze that came down of an evening from the hills into the city, and tempted me into the country. Besides, it was to be an open-air party, a house-warming for the Wartenheimers' villa, and I did not need to fear that it would be any sort of formal function. It is also strange that as I drove out of town I scarcely thought of the possibility of meeting Frau Mathilde, although I knew that Herr von Wartenheimer had bought the Greek dancing-girl from Samodeski for his villa; and I also knew that Frau von Wartenheimer had fallen in love with the sculptor, as indeed most women did.

But apart from this, I might well have thought about Mathilde, for, in the times of her girlhood, I had spent many charming hours in her company. There was more especially a summer on Lake Geneva, seven years ago, exactly a year before her engagement, that I shall not easily forget. It seems, indeed, as if, in spite of my grey hairs, I must have imagined many things, for when she married Samodeski a year later I felt a certain disappointment and was entirely convinced — or actually hoped — that she would not be happy with him. I did not see Mathilde again until the party given by Gregor Samodeski, soon after his return from the honeymoon, in his studio on the Gusshausgasse — it was an amusing affair at which all the guests had to appear in Japanese or Chinese costumes. She greeted me quite unaffectedly, and her whole demeanour gave the impression of repose and cheerfulness. But later on, while she was in conversation with others, I more than once caught a strange expression in her eyes, and after a little reflection I clearly understood its meaning. It said: "My dear friend, you think that he married me for my money, you think he does not love me, you think I am not happy — but you are wrong. You are utterly and entirely wrong. Look how gay I am and how my eyes are shining."

I met her a few times after that, but they were only casual meetings. I once ran across her on a journey: I dined with her and her husband in a station restaurant and he told me all sorts of entertaining stories which did not really make me laugh. I spoke to her once in a theatre — she was then with her mother who is really even more beautiful than she is.... God knows where Herr Samodeski was on that occasion. And last winter I saw her on the Prater: it was a clear, cold winter day. She was walking with her little girl over the snow under the bare chestnut trees. The carriage was following slowly. I happened to be on the other side of the road, and I did not cross it. Probably I was thinking about other matters, and I was no longer particularly interested in Mathilde. And to-day I should very likely not be thinking about her and her sudden death, had it not been for that last encounter at the Wartenheimers'. I recall that evening now with a strange and even painful clarity,

just like those old days on Lake Geneva.

It was getting dark when I got to the house. The guests were strolling about the paths. I greeted my host and a few acquaintances. From somewhere came the sound of music from a small chamber orchestra, concealed behind the trees. I soon came upon a small pool, backed by a semi-circle of tall trees; in the centre of it, on a dark pedestal, so that she seemed poised above the water, gleamed the Greek dancing girl: she was, too, rather theatrically lit up by electric rays from the house. I remembered the sensation it had made in the Secession Exhibit the year before: I must confess it even made an impression on me, though I greatly dislike Samodeski, and though I have a strange feeling that it is not really he who creates the beautiful things that he somehow manages to produce, but something else that is within him, some inexplicable, blazing, even daemonic force, that will quite certainly be extinguished when he is no longer young and loved. I believe there are a great many artists of this kind, and for some time this circumstance has filled me with a certain satisfaction.

I met Mathilde near the pool. She was walking on the arm of a young man who looked like a Korps student, and introduced himself as a connection of the house. The three of us fell into a pleasant conversation and strolled up and down the garden, which now began to be lit up with flickering fairy-lights. The lady of the house approached us on the arm of Samodeski. We all stood for a while, and, to my own astonishment, I said a few very appreciative words to the sculptor about his Greek dancing-girl. I was really not responsible for what I said: there was a genial, cheerful atmosphere about, as often happens on such an evening in spring. People who otherwise regard each other with complete indifference are found exchanging the heartiest greetings, and others who are already conscious of a certain bond of sympathy are moved to pour out their hearts in confidences. For instance, when I sat down on a bench and lit a cigarette, a gentleman came up to me whom I only knew very slightly, and who suddenly began to sing the praises of people who make so agreeable a use of their wealth as our hosts. I was entirely of his opinion, although I generally regard Herr von Wartenheimer as a complete and utter snob. I then began, quite without cause, to expound to my companion my views on modern sculpture, about which I understand very little, and in any case they would certainly have been without the slightest interest for him, but under the influence of that seductive spring evening he agreed with them enthusiastically. Later on I met my host's nieces, who thought the party extremely romantic, mainly because the lights were glittering between the leaves and there was a sound of music in the distance. At the moment we were standing near the band, but I still thought the observation quite sensible, so deeply was I under the common spell of that spring evening.

Supper was laid at small tables which, so far as space permitted, were arranged on the large terrace with an overflow into the adjoining dining-room. The three great glass doors stood wide open. I sat at a table in the open air with one of the nieces; on my other side was Mathilde with the gentleman who looked like a Korps student, but was in fact a bank official and an officer of the reserve. Opposite us, but in the dining-room, sat Samodeski between the lady of the house and some other lovely woman whom I did not know. He kissed his hand to his wife with an air of mocking defiance, she nodded to him and smiled. Without quite knowing why, I looked at him rather closely. He was certainly a handsome fellow with his steel-blue eyes and his long black pointed beard, which he would sometimes smooth against his chin with two fingers of his left hand. But I also think that never in my life have I seen a man so enveloped, as one might say, by ardent words and looks and gestures as on that evening. At first it seemed as though he was merely tolerating all this adoration. But I soon saw, by his manner of gently whispering to those women, his intolerably triumphant expression, and especially by the excited gaiety of his companions, that this apparently harmless conversation was fed by a secret fire.

Mathilde must, of course, have noticed this just as clearly as I did, but she appeared to be quite unperturbed as she talked first to her neighbour and then to me. Gradually she turned her whole attention to me, enquired after various external circumstances of my life, and asked me to tell her about my trip to Athens the previous year. Then she began to talk about her little daughter, who had begun to show a remarkable talent for singing Schubert's songs by ear; about her parents who had bought a little house in Heitzing for their old age; about some old church tapestries that she had discovered in Salzburg the year before, and about a hundred other things. But under the surface of all this something quite different had come between us: a silent, bitter conflict: she was trying by her composure to convince me of the serenity of her happiness, and I was struggling not to believe her. I could not help thinking once more of that Chinese-Japanese evening, when she had tried to do this once before. This time she really felt that she was making little impression on my misgivings, and that she must think out some special means of overcoming them. And so it occurred to her to call my attention to the two lovely women's insinuating and affectionate manner to her husband, and she began to talk about his popularity among women as if, like a good comrade, she ought without uneasiness or suspicion to take pleasure in it as she did in his good looks and his genius. But the more she tried to appear contented and at peace, the deeper were the shadows that moved across her brow. When, on one occasion, she raised her glass to Samodeski, her hand trembled. She tried to conceal and overcome it, with the result that for a moment or two not only her hand but her arm — her whole body — was so paralysed that I was almost afraid. She recovered herself, threw a sidelong glance at me, clearly noticed that she was on the point of losing her game at last, and said suddenly, as though in a last despairing attempt:

"I'm certain you think I'm jealous."

And before I had time to answer she added quickly: "Oh, many people think so. At first Gregor thought so himself."

She intentionally spoke quite loudly, and the people at the other table could have heard every word.

"Ah well," she said, looking across into the room, "with a husband like that, handsome and famous... and not being generally considered very pretty oneself.... Oh, you needn't answer.... I know I've got a little prettier since I had my baby."

She was possibly right, but for her husband — I was quite convinced of that — the distinction of her features had never had much meaning, and as for her figure — with the loss of her girlish slimness her sole charm for him had probably disappeared. Of course, I babbled out some hurried words of agreement: she seemed pleased, and went on with increasing confidence:

"But I haven't the slightest talent for jealousy. I did not at once realise this myself. I gradually came to understand it, and more especially a few years ago in Paris.... You knew we were there, of course?"

I remembered.

"It was then that Gregor made the busts of Princess La Hire and of the Minister Chocquet, and many others. We had such a lovely life there, just like young people... well, of course, we're both still young... I mean like a pair of lovers, though we did go out into the world from time to time.... We sometimes called upon the Austrian Ambassador, and visited the La Hires, and a few others. But in general we didn't go about much in Society. We lived, in fact, up in Montmartre, in a rather shabby house where Gregor also had his studio. I assure you that many of the young artists we went about with had no notion that we were married. We ran about everywhere together. I've often sat late into the night with him in the Café Athènes, with Léandre, Carabin, and many others. And we went about sometimes with all sorts of women that I probably should not have cared to know in Vienna... though when all is said and done..." She threw a quick glance across at Frau von Wartenheimer, and continued: "And many of them were very pretty. Sometimes we had

with us Henri Chabran's last mistress, who always wore black since his death and had a new lover every week — but they all had to wear deep mourning while they were with her — she insisted on that.... Strange people they were that we got to know. You can imagine that the women ran after my husband just as much as everywhere else: it was truly laughable. But as I was always with him — or at any rate most of the time — they did not make any open advances, especially as I passed as his mistress.... Yes, if they had known that I was only his wife...! And so one day a strange thing happened to me, that you would certainly never have believed, and indeed, speaking candidly, I am still astonished at my courage." She stared in front of her and spoke more softly than before. "Besides it is possible that it is in a way connected with something — well, you shall hear.

"For some weeks I had known that I was about to have a child, and I was unbelievably happy. At first I was not merely gayer but, strangely enough, even more lively than ever before.... Well, I must tell you that one fine evening I had put on men's clothes and gone out with Gregor in search of adventures. Of course, I first made him promise that he would do exactly as he liked... otherwise there would have been no sense in the whole affair. I looked simply splendid — you would not have recognised me... no one did. A friend of Gregor's, a certain Léonce Albert, a young painter, a humpback, called for us that evening. It was lovely weather... May... quite warm, and I was as shameless as you can think! I had calmly taken off my overcoat — a very smart yellow overcoat — and was carry it over my arm... just as men do.... It was indeed beginning to get dark... we dined in a little restaurant on the outer Boulevard, then we went on to the 'Roulotte,' where Legay was then singing, and Montoya... 'Tu t'en iras les pieds devant...' You heard it here lately in the Wiedener Theatre, didn't you?"

At that moment Mathilde threw a quick glance across at her husband, who did not notice it. It was as though she were taking leave of him for a long time. Then, with ever-increasing intensity, she seemed to plunge into the sequel.

"In the 'Roulotte,'" she said, "was a very elegant lady, who was sitting just in front of us: she flirted with Gregor, and in such a way!... Really you couldn't imagine anything more shameless. I shall never understand how her husband did not strangle her on the spot. I would have done so. I think she was a duchess.... Now, don't laugh, she was certainly a lady of the great world, in spite of her behaviour... one can always tell.... And I really wanted Gregor to play up... of course I did!... I should have liked to know how these things start.... I wanted him to write her a note, or do whatever he would have done before he was married. Yes, I did want him to, though it might have got him into trouble. I suppose it's our terrible feminine curiosity.... But Gregor, I am thankful to say, was not interested. We soon went straight out again — out into the lovely May night, and Léonce was still with us. He quite lost his heart to me that evening, and, contrary to his habit, was positively gallant. He was ordinarily very shy — owing to his appearance.... I said, 'It must be the effect of the yellow overcoat that has gone to your head.' And we strolled gaily on like three students.

"Then came the real adventure. We went into the Moulin Rouge which was part of the programme. Something had to happen some time.... We had had no experiences until then, except that a woman had spoken to me — to me, can you believe it? — on the street. But that was nothing. We got to the Moulin Rouge about one. You probably know what the place is like: I had really thought it was worse.... At first nothing happened whatever, and it really looked as if the whole escapade would come to nothing. I began to get peevish. 'Don't be childish,' said Gregor: 'you don't suppose they're going to fall at our feet the moment we come in?' He said 'our' out of courtesy to Léonce: there was not much chance of anyone falling at Léonce's feet. But just as we were all seriously thinking about going home, the affair took a turn. A person came up to me — yes, it was really to me — who had happened to pass us several times already.... She had

quite a serious air and looked rather different from most of the women present. She was not at all showily dressed — in white, entirely in white. I had noticed that she did not so much as answer two or three men who spoke to her, but simply walked on without condescending to notice them. She just watched the ballet, quietly and with a detached sort of interest. Léonce, at my request, asked some men he knew whether they had ever met the beautiful creature anywhere, and one of them remembered that he had met her the winter before at one of the Thursday balls in the Latin Quarter. Léonce then went up to her as she stood a little way off, and she answered him.

He then brought her up to us, and we all sat down at a small table and drank champagne. Gregor paid no attention to her whatever — she might not have been there at all. He talked to me and me alone.... That seemed especially to provoke her. She became gayer, more talkative, more unconstrained, and gradually slipped into telling us her entire life-story. The things that such a poor soul can — or perhaps must — go through! One reads of it so often, but when one hears it as a piece of reality from someone sitting near by it seems so strange. I still remember a great deal of it. Someone had betrayed and abandoned her when she was fifteen. Then she became a model, and after that she walked on at a small theatre. The things she told us about the Director!... I should have gone out there and then if I had not been already a little excited by champagne.... Then she fell in with a medical student who was working at anatomy, and she often came to fetch him from the dissecting-room... or more often stayed with him there.... No, really, I can't repeat what she told us. The medical student, of course, left her. That, she decided, should be the end — yes, really! And she tried to commit suicide. She was very amusing... when she described it. I can still hear her voice.

... It did not sound so common as it was. And she pulled her dress aside and showed us a little reddish scar over her left breast. And as we were all looking very gravely at the scar she suddenly said — no, she screamed — to my husband: 'Kiss it!' As I have already told you, Gregor had taken no notice of her. Even while she was telling her story, he hardly listened; he stared about the room, smoked cigarettes, and now when she called out to him he hardly smiled. However, I nudged him, and bothered him — I was really rather tipsy, and it was the most extraordinary experience in my life. And whether he liked it or not, he had to... at any rate he had to make as though he had touched the place with his lips. After that we were gayer and madder than ever. I have never laughed so much as I did that evening, and I never knew why. And I never could have believed it possible that a female creature — and such a one — could fall so madly in love with a man in the course of an hour as that woman did with Gregor. Her name was Madeleine."

I don't know whether Frau Mathilde spoke the name louder on purpose — in any case it seemed as though her husband heard it, for he looked across at us: he looked at his wife in an ordinary sort of way, but our eyes met, and so remained fixed for a space, but without any special understanding. Then he suddenly smiled at his wife, she nodded back, he went on talking to his neighbours, and she turned again to me.

"I can't, of course, remember everything that Madeleine told us later," said she; "it was all so weird. But I will be frank: there was one moment when I was a little put out. That was when Madeleine took my husband's hand and kissed it. But it was soon over. For at that moment, you see, I could not help thinking of our child. And then I felt how indissolubly I and Gregor were bound together: what was the rest? — shadows, unreality, or make-believe, like that evening. And all was well again. Then we went out and sat until dawn in a café on the Boulevard. There I heard Madeleine asking my husband to go home with her. He simply laughed at her. And then, to bring the joke to a good and, in a certain sense, a profitable end — you know what egoists all artists are, where their art is concerned at any rate — well, in a word, he told her he was a sculptor, and asked her to come and see him soon as he would like to model her. And she replied: 'If you're a sculptor, I'll hang myself: but I'll come.'"

Mathilde was silent. But I have never seen the eyes of any woman express — or conceal — so much pain. Then, when she had braced herself to tell what still remained, she went on: “Gregor wanted to insist that I should be in his studio next day. Yes, he actually proposed that I should stay hidden behind a curtain when she came. Well, there are women, many *women,* I know, who would have accepted. But, I think, either one believes or one does not... and I have decided to believe. Am I not right?” And she looked at me with her great questioning eyes. I merely nodded, and she went on. “Madeleine, of course, came the next day and then came often... as many others came before her, and many others have come since.... And she was one of the loveliest, you may believe me. You yourself stood before her to-day in admiration, out there by the pool.”

“The Dancing-girl?”

“Yes, Madeleine was the model for her. And now do you suppose that I should have been suspicious in such circumstances, or in others like them? Should I not have turned both our lives into a torment if I had? I am very glad that I have no inclination to be jealous.”

Someone was standing in the central door and had started proposing our host’s health in a speech that was no doubt very witty, for the company was laughing heartily. But I was watching Mathilde, who was listening as little as I was. And I saw how she looked across at her husband with an expression that revealed not only an unending love, but also wore a mask of unshakable faith, as though it were truly her highest duty by no means to trouble him in the enjoyment of the life that was his. And he acknowledged her look — smiling and unperturbed, although he, of course, knew as well as I that she was suffering, and had long been suffering like an animal.

And that is why I don’t believe the story of the heart attack. I got to know Mathilde so well that evening, and I am quite convinced, just as from first to last she played the happy wife before her husband, while he deceived her and drove her into madness, so at the end she put up this performance of a natural death, when she threw her life away because she could bear it no longer. And he accepted this last sacrifice, also, as though it had been his due.

I was standing now before the garden-fence.... The shutters were closed and barred. White and as though enchanted stood the little villa in the half-light, and there was the marble glittering between the red boughs.

Perhaps, after all, I may be unjust to Samodeski. He is fundamentally so stupid that he really does not suspect the truth. But it is sad to think that there was no greater joy for Mathilde in her death than to know that her last divine deception had succeeded.

Or might I after all be wrong, and it was natural death?... No, I won’t allow myself to be deprived of the right to hate the man whom Mathilde had so loved. That will probably be for a long while my only solace.

THE PROPHECY

I



NOT FAR FROM BOTZEN, ON SOME RISING GROUND, almost buried in woods and hardly visible from the main road, lies the small property of the Baron von Schottenegg. A friend of mine who had been practising as a doctor in Botzen for the past ten years, and whom I met there again in the autumn, had introduced me to the Baron. The latter was then fifty years of age and an amateur in several arts. He composed a little, played the violin and the piano really well, and could draw quite tolerably. But his most serious pursuit in his earlier days had been acting. It seemed that as a young man he had for several years gone about the Empire with a small touring company under an assumed name. But, from whatever cause, whether his father's persistent opposition, insufficient talent, or bad luck, the Baron had given up his career quite early; very shortly afterwards he had followed the family tradition and entered the service of the State, and there he had remained for the past twenty years as a faithful, if unenthusiastic, official. But when he resigned at scarcely more than forty years of age, immediately after his father's death, it then became clear for the first time how deeply attached he still was to his youthful pursuit. He had the villa on the slope of the Guntschnaberg put in order, and then gathered round him, especially in summer and autumn, an ever-increasing crowd of guests, both men and women, who performed all sorts of plays that were easy to act.

His wife, who came of an old Tyrol middle-class family, took little real interest in artistic matters, but she was clever and had a friendly affection for her husband, whose hobby she regarded with a touch of sarcasm, though quite good-naturedly, for the Baron's interest fell in with her own social inclinations. The company one met at the castle might, to fastidious observers, have seemed a little mixed, but guests whose birth and breeding might otherwise have disposed them to be exclusive took no offence at such a casual assemblage which seemed sufficiently justified by their common interest. In any case the name and reputation of their host and hostess banished any suspicion of any freedom of behaviour. Among many others, whom I can no longer call to mind, I met at the castle a young count attached to the Innsbruck provincial administration, a Jäger officer from Riva, a captain of the General Staff with his wife and daughter, an opera singer from Berlin, a Botzen liqueur manufacturer with two sons, Baron Meudolt who had just come back from his travels round the world, a retired actor from Bückeberg, a widowed Countess Saima, who had been an actress in her youth, her daughter, and the Danish painter, Petersen.

Only a few of the guests lived in the castle. Some of them took lodgings in Botzen, others stayed in a modest hotel at the cross-roads below, where a small lane branched off up to the castle. But the whole company usually met at the castle in the early afternoon, and then, sometimes under the direction of the retired actor, sometimes under that of the Baron, who never acted himself, rehearsals were held that lasted till the evening. They began with jokes and laughter but gradually grew more and more serious until the day of the performance arrived, when, as the weather, caprice, or arrangements might dictate, but as far as possible taking account of the scene of the action, the representation took place either in the meadow beyond the little garden of the castle at the edge of the forest or in the ground-floor hall with its three great bow windows.

When I first called on the Baron I had no other idea than to spend a cheerful day in a fresh place among fresh people. But as happens when a man wanders about aimlessly and in complete freedom, and when, too, he is no longer in his first youth and has no vital ties to call him home, I allowed myself to be persuaded by

the Baron to stay for some time. One day became two, and three, and more, and so, to my own astonishment, I took up my abode until far into the autumn up at the little castle where a very comfortably furnished room in a small tower, with a view into the valley, was given up to my use. This first visit of mine to Guntschnaberg was entirely delightful, and remains with me as a very peaceful memory, for I made no more than a fleeting acquaintance of any of the guests, and also, as I felt equally inclined for reflection and for work, I spent a large part of my time in solitary walks in the woods. Not even the circumstance that the Baron, in his courtesy, had one of my little plays performed disturbed my peace, as no one took any notice of me in my character as author. I look upon that evening much rather as a most delightful experience, for with that performance in the green meadow, and under the open sky, a modest dream of my youth came to a late and, indeed by that time, an unexpected fulfillment.

The stir and movement in the castle gradually began to die down, the men's leave — such of them as belonged to a profession — was running out, and we only had a few visits from friends settled in the neighbourhood. It was only then that I began to get better acquainted with the Baron and found in him, to my surprise, a great deal more modesty than is commonly the case with amateurs. He did not in the least try to persuade himself that what went on at his castle was anything else than a higher form of social amusement. But as the course of his life had prevented his entering upon a lasting and serious connection with his beloved art, he allowed himself to be satisfied with the glamour shed, as it were, from a far distance over the harmless theatricalities in the castle, and was moreover glad that they were untainted by the sordid details that professionalism always brings with it.

In the course of one of our walks he mentioned quite incidentally that he hoped one day to see on his open-air stage a play that had been constructed with an eye to the unconfined space and the natural background. This observation fell so nearly in with a plan that I had been meditating for some time that I promised the Baron to carry out his wish.

Soon afterwards I left the castle. In the early days of the next spring I sent to the Baron, with a friendly message recalling my delightful stay the previous autumn, a play that I thought might suit his purpose. I soon got an answer from him, conveying his thanks, and a hearty invitation for the coming autumn. I spent the summer in the mountains, and in the early days of September when the cooler weather set in I went down to the Lake of Garda without realising that I was quite near the Baron von Schottenegg's castle. Yes, it seems to-day as if I had at that time completely forgotten the little castle and all its doings. On September 8th I got a letter from the Baron sent on from Vienna, expressing his mild astonishment at not having heard from me, and informing me that on September 9th the little play I had sent him in the spring was to be performed, and that I must on no account fail to be present. The Baron promised me special pleasure from the children who were playing in the piece; they could not be induced to leave it, and even in between the rehearsals ran about in their costumes and played in the meadow. The chief part, he continued, had, as a result of a series of accidents, fallen to his nephew, Herr Franz von Umprecht, who — as I no doubt remembered — had only twice taken a part in tableaux, but had developed a surprising talent as an actor.

I started off, reached Botzen by evening of the performance. I went up to the castle, where the Baron and his wife received me very graciously. There were also other old acquaintances: the retired actor, the Countess Saima with her daughter, Herr von Umprecht and his lovely wife, and the fourteen-year-old daughter of the forester who was to speak the prologue to my piece. A large company was expected for the afternoon, and at the performance in the evening there would be more than a hundred spectators, not merely personal guests of the Baron, but people from the surrounding neighbourhood, who, as often before, were freely admitted to the rustic theatre. On this occasion a small orchestra had been engaged consisting of professional musicians from

Botzen and a few amateurs, who were to play an overture of Weber, and also some incidental music which the Baron had himself composed.

We were all very gay at lunch, only Herr von Umprecht seemed to me more silent than the rest. At first I could hardly call him to mind, and I was astonished to notice that he glanced at me with an air of understanding, and then with a timid sort of expression, without however addressing a word to me. His face gradually grew more familiar, and I suddenly remembered that in one of last year's tableaux he had impersonated a monk sitting with upturned elbows at a chess-board. I asked him whether I were not mistaken. He seemed almost confused when I addressed him: the Baron answered for him, and made some jesting remark about his nephew's newly discovered histrionic talent. At which Herr von Umprecht laughed rather strangely and stared in front of him; then he threw a quick glance at me suggestive of some kind of understanding between us, which I was quite unable to explain. But from that moment he avoided meeting my eye.

II

Soon after lunch I had gone up to my room. I stood once more at the open window as I had so often done in the previous year, and enjoyed the delightful view down into the valley which, quite narrow just below me, gradually widened and then completely opened out to take in the town and the surrounding meadows.

After a short time there was a knock at the door. Herr von Umprecht came in, stopped in the doorway and said with a certain timidity: "Excuse me if I am disturbing you." Then he came nearer and went on: "But as soon as you have listened to me for a quarter of an hour, I am convinced that you will think there was good reason for my visit."

I invited Herr von Umprecht to sit down. He took no notice but continued excitedly: "I am, in fact, in the strangest way your debtor and I feel it my duty to thank you."

Of course I thought — how should I not? — that these words of Herr von Umprecht referred to his part, and as they seemed more than courtesy demanded, I made some deprecatory reply. But Umprecht immediately interrupted me. "You cannot know the intention of my words. Might I ask you to listen to me?" He sat down on the window-seat, crossed his legs, and making an obvious effort to control himself as far as possible, he began: "I am now the owner of an estate, as you perhaps know, but before that I was an officer. And at that time, ten years ago — ten years ago *to-day* — I met with the incredible adventure under the shadow of which I have in a sense lived until now, and which to-day finds its fulfillment through you, though without your knowledge and aid. Between us two there is indeed some bond that is not of this world, which you will probably be as little able to explain as I am. But you must at least learn of its existence.

"At that time my regiment was stationed in some wretched little hole in Poland. The only distractions beyond our duties, which were not always enough to occupy us, were drink and play. Beyond that, we had before our eyes the possibility of having to stick there for years, and not all of us knew how to face such a comfortless prospect. One of my best friends had shot himself in the third month of our stay there. Another brother officer, once the best fellow among us, suddenly developed into a complete drunkard, became unmannerly, bad-tempered, almost undependable, and had some sort of scene with a lawyer that cost him his commission. The captain of my company was married and — I don't know whether justifiably or not — so jealous that he one day threw his wife out of the window. Mysteriously enough she was not hurt; her husband died in a mad-house. One of our subalterns, who had until then been an excellent lad, though extraordinarily stupid, suddenly took it into his head that he could understand philosophy, studied Kant and Hegel, and learnt

whole sections of their works off by heart, as children learn their spelling books. As for me, I did nothing but bore myself, and that so terribly, that often as I lay on my bed of an afternoon I was afraid I might go mad. Our barracks lay outside the town, and consisted of at most thirty scattered huts: the next town, a good hour's ride away, was dirty, disgusting, smelly, and full of Jews. We were forced to have a certain amount to do with them — the hotel-keeper was a Jew, so was the owner of the café, and the shoemaker. You can well imagine that we treated them with as much contempt as possible. They irritated us particularly, because a certain prince who was attached to our regiment as major always returned the Jews' salutes with studied courtesy — whether he did it to amuse himself or whether he really liked them, I do not know — and he also, strange as it seems, took most particular pains to protect our regimental doctor, who was quite obviously of Jewish extraction. I would, of course, not tell you this except that it was precisely this caprice on the part of the prince that brought me into contact with that personage who was called on to create in so mysterious a fashion the bond between yourself and me. He was a conjurer, and in fact the son of a Jewish brandy merchant in the neighbouring small Polish town. As a young man he had been in business at Lemberg, and then gone to Vienna where he had learnt a few cardtricks from somebody. He went on practising by himself, picked up some more conjuring tricks one way and another, and gradually made such progress that he was able to go about the world and appear with success in music-halls or at receptions. In the summer he always came back to his native town to visit his parents. There he never appeared in public, and thus it was that I first saw him in the street, where I was at once astonished by his appearance. He was a small, thin, beardless man, probably at that time about thirty years of age, dressed with a ridiculous elegance quite unsuitable to the season of the year: he walked about in a black frock-coat and a glossy tall hat, and wore magnificently brocaded waistcoats: and in strong sunshine he wore a pair of dark spectacles on his nose.

"One evening some fifteen or sixteen of us were sitting as usual after dinner at our long table in the mess. It was a sultry night and the windows stood open. A few of us had begun to play cards, others leaned against the window and talked, others drank and smoked in silence. Then the corporal of the day came in and announced the conjurer's arrival. We were at first rather astonished, but without more ado our visitor calmly appeared and introduced himself in a few words in his fluent jargon, thanking us for the invitation that had been sent him. As he said this, he turned to the prince, who went up to him and — simply to annoy us, of course — shook hands with him. The conjurer took this as perfectly natural, and then observed that he would show us a few card-tricks, after which he said he would do some experiments in hypnotism and palmistry. He had scarcely finished when some of our officers who were sitting in a corner playing cards noticed that the court cards were not there; at a sign from the conjurer they came flying in through the open window. The tricks that followed were very interesting, and went a good deal beyond anything of the kind I had ever seen. The hypnotic experiments he then carried out seemed to me even more remarkable. We all felt something like horror when we saw our philosophic subaltern put to sleep, and then, in obedience to the magician's orders, jump through the open window, scramble up the smooth wall to the roof, run round the whole quadrangle close to the edge and then slide down into the barrack square. When he stood on the ground again, still in a state of trance, the colonel said to the magician: 'If he had broken his neck, you wouldn't have left the barracks alive, I promise you.' Never shall I forget the contemptuous look which was the Jew's silent reply to this remark. Then he said slowly:

"'Shall I read your hand, sir, and tell you whether you will leave this barracks dead or alive?'

"I don't know how the colonel and the rest of us would have usually answered such an impertinent remark, but there was such a weird, excited feeling in the air that no one was surprised when the colonel reached out his hand to the conjurer and said, imitating the man's dialect: 'Read away.'

“All this took place in the barrack-yard, and the subaltern, still in the trance, stood against the wall with outstretched arms like one crucified. The conjurer took the colonel’s hand and carefully studied the lines.

“‘Can you see all right, Jew?’ asked a lieutenant, who was rather drunk.

“The other glanced at him, and said gravely: ‘My professional name is Marco Polo.’

“The prince laid a hand on the Jew’s shoulder and said: ‘My friend Marco Polo has sharp eyes.’

“‘Well, what do you see?’ asked the colonel more politely.

“‘Must I say?’ asked Marco Polo.

“‘We can’t force you,’ said the prince.

“‘Speak!’ cried the colonel.

“‘I would rather not,’ answered Marco Polo.

“The colonel laughed loudly. ‘Out with it,’ he said, ‘it can’t be as bad as all that. And if it is, it can’t be true.’

“‘It is very bad,’ said the conjurer, ‘and it is also true.’

“All were silent.

“‘Well?’ said the colonel.

“‘You will not have to suffer from the cold any more,’ answered Marco Polo.

“‘What!’ cried the colonel. ‘Is the regiment going to be sent to Riva at last?’

“‘I can see nothing about the regiment, sir. All I can see is that you will be dead by the autumn.’

“The colonel laughed, but all the rest were silent and I assure you we all felt that a mark was set upon the colonel in that moment. Then someone intentionally broke into a loud laugh, the rest did likewise, and with a clatter of noise and laughter we all went back into the mess.

“‘Well,’ said the colonel, ‘my business is settled. Isn’t anyone else curious?’

“One answered jestingly: ‘No, we don’t want to find out anything.’ Another suddenly discovered that having one’s fate foretold like this was strictly contrary to religious principle, and a young lieutenant observed with emphasis that people like Marco Polo ought to be locked up for life. I saw the prince standing smoking in a corner with one of the senior officers and heard him say: ‘Where does the magic begin?’ In the meantime I walked up to Marco Polo who was getting ready to go, and said, without letting anyone else hear:

“‘Prophesy for me.’

“He took my hand almost mechanically. Then he said:

“‘I can’t see properly here.’

“I noticed that the oil lamps had begun to flicker, and that the lines on my hand seemed to quiver.

“‘Come outside into the yard, lieutenant; I can do it better in the moonlight.’ He still held my hand, and I followed him outside through the open door.

“Suddenly a strange thought came into my mind.

“‘Listen, Marco Polo, if what you did for the colonel is all that you can do, I would sooner leave it alone.’

“Without more ado the magician dropped my hand and smiled.

“‘The lieutenant is afraid.’

“I turned quickly to see if anyone had heard us; but we were already through the barracks gate, and on the main road leading to the town.

“‘I want to know something a little more definite,’ I said; ‘that is what I mean. Words can always be interpreted in different ways.’

“Marco Polo looked at me.

“‘What does the lieutenant want?... perhaps the portrait of his future wife?’

“‘Could you manage that?’

“Marco Polo shrugged his shoulders.

“‘It could be done.... It is possible.’

“‘Well, I don’t want to see that,’ I answered. ‘I want to know what will be happening to me some time later on — say in ten years.’

“Marco Polo shook his head.

“‘I can’t do that — but I can do something else perhaps.’

“‘What?’

“‘I can show you a picture of any given moment of your future life, Herr Lieutenant.’

“I did not at once understand.

“‘What do you mean?’

“‘I mean this: I can conjure into existence a moment of your future life, so that we who are standing here can see it.’

“‘What!’

“‘The Herr Lieutenant must just say which moment he wants.’

“I did not quite understand, but I was in a state of great tension.

“‘Good!’ said I; ‘if you can do that, I should like to see what will be happening to me this very second in ten years’ time.... Do you understand, Marco Polo?’

“‘Certainly, Herr Lieutenant,’ said Marco Polo, and looked at me steadily.

“And very soon he was gone... but gone, too, were the barracks, which I had just seen glittering in the moonlight — gone were the mean huts scattered over the moonlit plain, and I saw my own self, as a man often sees himself in dreams — I saw myself ten years older, with a brown beard, a scar on my forehead, stretched out on a bier, in the middle of a meadow — and kneeling at my side a beautiful woman with red hair, holding her hands before her face; near me were a boy and a girl, a dark forest in the background, and not far off stood two huntsmen with torches in their hands.... You’re astonished, eh? aren’t you?”

I was indeed astonished, for what he was describing to me was the scene with which my play was to end this evening at ten o’clock, and in which he was to play the dying hero.

“You don’t believe me,” continued Herr von Umprecht; “and I don’t blame you. But I will soon make you believe me.”

Herr von Umprecht felt in his coat pocket and produced a sealed envelope.

“Please look at what is written on the back.”

I read aloud:

“Sealed and attested on January 4th, 1859, to be opened on September 9th, 1868.” And beneath it was the signature of a Vienna notary personally well known to me, one Dr. Artiner.

“That is to-day,” said Herr von Umprecht. “And it is exactly ten years ago to-day that I had my mysterious adventure with Marco Polo which is now to reach its climax, though it is no less mysterious than ever. Year after year, as though I had been the sport of a capricious fate, I was beset in the strangest way by possibilities that might or might not bring fulfillment of that prophecy: sometimes they threatened to become realities, then vanished, again looked pitilessly certain, then passed into the distance, and again returned.... But I must come back to my story. The vision itself certainly did not last longer than a moment, for the same loud burst of laughter from the lieutenant still echoed in my ears which I had heard before the phantasm appeared. And Marco Polo stood once more before me with a smile on his lips, whether sad or contemptuous I could not say, took off his top hat and said ‘Good evening, Herr Lieutenant, I hope you were pleased,’ turned, and went

slowly along the high road in the direction of the town. And in the course of the next few days he went away.

"My first thought was, when I got back to the barracks, that it must have been some supernatural appearance which Marco Polo, perhaps by the help of an unseen assistant, was able to produce by some sort of arrangement of mirrors. As I walked through the barrack-yard I saw to my horror the subaltern still leaning against the wall in an attitude of crucifixion. He had clearly been completely forgotten. I heard the others inside talking and disputing in a great state of excitement. I took the lad by the arm. He immediately woke up, showed no signs of surprise, except that he could not understand his brother officers' excited state of mind. I myself joined, with a kind of dull rage, in the heated but futile conversation that had been started about the strange happenings that we had witnessed, and I talked no more sense than any of the others. Suddenly the colonel cried out:

"'Well, gentlemen, I'll bet I'm alive next spring. Forty-five to one!'

"And he turned to one of our officers, a lieutenant, who enjoyed a certain reputation for betting and gambling. 'Anything doing?' Although it was clear that the other found his proposal hard to resist, he apparently thought it unseemly to make a bet on the death of his colonel with the colonel himself. So he smiled and said nothing. He must have regretted it; for a fortnight later, on the second day of the great imperial manœuvres, our colonel fell from his horse and was killed on the spot. And when this happened we all realised that we had expected nothing else.

"It was not until then, however, that I began to think with a certain disquiet of that nocturnal prophecy, of which with some strange diffidence I had said nothing to anyone. It was at Christmas, while on leave in Vienna, that I opened the matter to a friend — a certain Frederick von Gulant — you have perhaps heard of him, he wrote charming verses, and died very young.... Well, he it was who, with my consent, drew up the document that you will find in this envelope. His view, in fact, was that such events should not be lost to knowledge, whether their hypotheses were finally proved to be true or false. I went with him to Dr. Artiner, in whose presence this envelope was sealed. It has been kept in the lawyer's office until now, and not until yesterday was it handed over to me at my request. I am prepared to confess that the gravity with which Gulant treated the affair somewhat upset me at first, but when we had parted, and especially when he died shortly afterwards, the whole story began to look highly ridiculous.

"In the first place, it was clear to me that I had my fate entirely in my own hands. Nothing in the world could compel me to lie on a bier, wearing a brown heard, at ten o'clock on the evening of September 9th, 1868; I could keep away from forest and meadows, and I did not need to marry a wife with red hair and have children. The only thing that I perhaps could not avoid was an accident, say a duel, which might leave me a scar on my forehead. So, to begin with, I was quite undisturbed.

"A year after this prophecy I married Fräulein von Heimsal, my present wife; soon afterwards I left the service and took up farming. I visited various moderate-sized estates, and — ridiculous as it may sound I took care that they did not include any ground that could resemble the meadow of my dream — for so I was accustomed to think of that phantasmal scene. I was on the point of concluding a purchase when my wife inherited some property, and with it an estate in Carinthia with some excellent shooting. The first day I walked over my new domain I came upon a stretch of meadowland which, edged as it was by forest and gently sloping, seemed to me singularly like the place I had, perhaps, every reason to avoid. I was slightly alarmed. I had said nothing to my wife about the prophecy: she is so superstitious that my confession would certainly have poisoned her whole life until" — here he smiled with something like relief— "until to-day. So, of course, I could not share my anxiety with her. But I comforted myself with the conviction that there was nothing to make me spend September of 1868 on my estate.

“In the year 1860 a son was born to me. From his earliest childhood I believed I could detect in his features some resemblance to those of the boy in my dream: sometimes it seemed to pass, and sometimes to grow more noticeable — to-day I have to confess to myself that the boy who is to stand by my bier at ten o’clock this evening is the very image of the boy of the vision. I have no daughter. But it so happened three years ago that my wife’s widowed sister, who had been living in America, died leaving a small daughter. At my wife’s request I crossed to America, and fetched the child to be brought up at home. When I first caught sight of her, I thought I noticed that she was completely like the girl in the dream. It did occur to me to leave the child among strangers in a strange land, but, of course, I immediately put away so dishonourable a thought and we took the child into our house. I again quite recovered my peace of mind, in spite of the children’s growing resemblance to the children of the apparition, for I told myself that my recollection of such childish faces of a dream might very well be deceptive. For a time my life flowed onward in complete peace. Yes, I had almost given up thinking of that strange evening in that dirty little hole in Poland when, two years ago, I was, not unreasonably, greatly shaken by a fresh warning of fate. I had had to be some months away from home; when I came back my wife met me with red hair, and her resemblance to the lady of the dream, whose face I had indeed never seen, seemed to me complete. I thought it best to hide my fear under an appearance of anger. I intentionally grew more and more furious, for an idea bordering on madness suddenly came into my mind: if I separated from my wife and children, all the danger must disappear, and I should have made a fool of destiny. My wife wept, sank to the ground in a collapse, begged my pardon, and explained the alteration in her appearance. A year before, upon the occasion of a journey to Munich, I became infatuated with the portrait of a red-haired woman in the exhibition there, and my wife had then and there made up her mind that she would take the first opportunity of making herself like the portrait, and would dye her hair. I naturally made her promise to get her hair back to its natural colour as soon as possible, and when that was done all seemed right again. Was it not clear that I had, as before, my fate in my own power?... Could not everything that had happened until now be explained quite naturally?... Had not thousands of other men estates with fields and forests, and a wife and children?... And the only thing that might perhaps have alarmed a superstitious man had not happened, and did not, until this last winter: the scar, that you now see adorning my forehead. I am not a coward — if you will let me say so; I fought two duels when I was an officer, under very dangerous conditions — and again eight years ago, shortly before my marriage, when I had already left the service. But when last year I was challenged on some trivial ground — an alleged want of courtesy in greeting someone — I preferred” — Herr von Umprecht blushed slightly— “to apologise. The affair was, of course, disposed of in due order, but I am perfectly certain that I should have fought on that occasion if I had not been seized by some lunatic fear that my opponent would wound me in the forehead, and slip another trump into the hand of fate.... But as you see, it did not help me: the scar is there. And the moment in which I got that wound was perhaps, in all the last years, the one that brought me the deepest realisation of my defencelessness. It was one evening last winter: I was in a train between Klagenfurt and Villach. Suddenly there was a jingle of glass, and I felt a pain in my forehead: at the same time something hard fell to the ground. I put my hand up to the place — it was bleeding: then I bent quickly down and picked up a pointed stone from the floor. The people in the carriage jumped up. ‘What has happened?’ cried one of them. They noticed I was bleeding and were much concerned. But there was one man — I can see him so clearly — who sat buried in his corner. At the next stop water was fetched, the station doctor put on a makeshift bandage; but while I was, of course, not afraid of dying of the wound, I knew that it must leave a scar. A conversation started in the carriage as to whether the stone was aimed at someone or whether it was just a boyish prank. The man in his corner said nothing and stared in front of him. At Villach I got out. Suddenly I found the man

beside me. ‘It was meant for me,’ he said. Before I could answer or even collect myself, he had disappeared; and I have never found out who it was. Someone with persecution-mania perhaps, or someone who had good reason to think himself pursued by some injured husband or brother, and whom I had possibly saved, as the scar was to be my fate.... Who can tell?

... After a few weeks it came out on my forehead exactly where I had seen it in my dream. And it became clearer than ever to me that I was caught in an unequal battle with an unknown mocking power, and with growing uneasiness I waited for the last scene of all.

“In the spring we received my uncle’s invitation. I was quite determined not to accept it as, although I could not recall any definite picture, it seemed not impossible that the dreadful place might be on his property. But my wife would not have understood a refusal, so I decided to come here with her and the children at the beginning of July, with the definite intention of leaving the castle as soon as possible and going further south, to Venice or the Lido. Very soon after we arrived the subject of your play came up, my uncle spoke of the small parts for children it contained, and asked me to let my two act in it. I had no objection. It was then his intention that the hero’s part should be taken by a professional actor. A few days later I was seized with a fear that I might fall dangerously ill and not be able to leave. So one evening I announced that I thought of leaving the castle on the next day for a short time and getting some sea bathing. I had to promise to come back at the beginning of September. The same evening there came a letter from the actor throwing up his part on some trivial ground. My uncle was very annoyed. He asked me to read the play — perhaps I could suggest someone we both knew who would suit the part? So I took the play up to my room and read it.

“Now try to imagine what passed in my mind when I came to the end and found described, word for word, the scene that had been predicted to me for September 9th of this year. I could not wait until the next day to tell my uncle that I wanted to play the part.

I was afraid that he would make objections, for since I had read the piece I felt as though I had come once more into safe keeping, and if I lost the chance of playing in your piece I would again become a victim to that unknown power. My uncle agreed at once and from then everything went on its smooth accustomed way. We have been rehearsing every day for several weeks, and I have gone through the scene that I must act this evening fifteen or twenty times already; I lie on the bier, the young Countess Saima with her lovely red hair, and her hands before her face, kneels before me, and the children stand at my side.”

While Herr von Umprecht uttered these words my eyes fell upon the envelope that lay upon the table still unopened. Herr von Umprecht smiled. “True, I still owe you a proof,” he said, and broke the seal. Inside was a folded paper. Umprecht unfolded it and spread it out on the table. Before me lay a complete plan of the final scene of the play, as I had conceived it myself. The background and wings were sketched out and marked “forest”: in the centre of the plan a horizontal object, with a male figure upon it, was indicated and marked “bier.”... Against the clear sketched-out figure was written in small letters with red ink: “Woman with red hair,”

“boy,”

“girl,”

“torch bearer,”

“man with raised hands.” I turned to Herr von Umprecht. “What does that mean? ‘Man with raised hands’?”

“I had almost forgotten about that,” said Herr von Umprecht slowly. “That figure comes into it in this way: in my vision was an old man lit up by the glare of the torches, completely bald, clean shaven, wearing spectacles and a dark green shawl round his neck, with raised hands and wide-staring eyes.”

This time I was startled. We were silent for a while, then, feeling strangely uneasy, I said: “Who do you think it is? Who could it be?”

“I assume,” said Umprecht calmly, “that it is one of the spectators, perhaps one of my uncle’s servants... or one of the peasants might have been overcome by the end of the play and tried to get on the stage... or perhaps fate has decreed that some lunatic, escaped from the asylum, by one of those coincidences which have nearly ceased to surprise me, is to rush across the stage just at the moment I am lying on my bier.”

I shook my head.

“What did you say?... bald... spectacles... a green shawl? Now the thing seems stranger than ever. There was to have been a character in my play just like the figure you saw, but I suppressed it. It was the wife’s mad father, who is mentioned in the first act and was to rush on to the stage at the end.”

“But his shawl and spectacles?”

“That must have been the actor’s own contribution, don’t you think?”

“Possibly.”

We were interrupted. Frau von Umprecht had sent to say that she would like to speak to her husband before the performance, and he took his leave. I stayed for awhile poring over the stage plan that Herr von Umprecht had left lying on the table.

III

Not long afterwards I made my way to the place where the play was to be performed. It lay behind the small castle and was separated from it by a pleasantly laid-out garden; and by the low edge at the end of it stood about ten long benches of plain wood; the front rows were covered with dark red tapestry. Beyond the first row stood a few music-stands and chairs: there was no curtain. The separation of the stage from the auditorium was indicated by two towering great pine trees, one at each side; on the right there was a rough shrubbery and behind it a comfortable easychair, invisible to the audience, for the prompter. On the left the place was open and there was a view down into the valley. Tall trees formed the background of the stage, only in the centre were they close together, and on the left some narrow paths crept out of the shadow. Farther back among the trees, in a little artificial clearing, was a table and some chairs where the actors were to wait for their cues. The lighting was provided by some tall old church lanterns with gigantic tapers, erected at the side of the stage and the auditorium in what would have been the wings. Behind the shrubbery to the right was a sort of open-air property room; there I saw among various small objects needed in the play the bier on which Herr von Umprecht was to die at the conclusion of the piece.... As I walked across the meadow it was glowing in the mild evening sunshine.

I had naturally thought over Herr von Umprecht’s story. At first I thought it was not impossible that Herr von Umprecht was one of those fantastic liars who go to all sorts of trouble to prepare a mystification from a long while ahead so as to make themselves interesting. I thought it conceivable that the notary’s signature was a forgery, and that Herr von Umprecht had enlisted accomplices to carry the matter through with conviction. I found my mind dwelling on the hitherto unknown man with raised hands, with whom Umprecht might well have entered into some understanding. But the part that this man had played in my first sketch of the piece, which no one could have known — and especially the favourable personal impression that Herr von Umprecht had made on me — dismissed my doubts. And improbable and even monstrous as his whole story seemed, I actually longed to be able to believe it; perhaps it was no mad vanity to feel myself the instrument of an overmastering will.

In the meantime I became aware of some stir and movement near by: servants were coming out of the castle, tapers were being lit, people from the neighbourhood — most of them in peasant dress — were slowly climbing up the hill and disposing themselves modestly at the ends of the benches. Soon our hostess appeared with several ladies and gentlemen, who sat down here and there. I joined them and talked to some of them I had met last year. The members of the orchestra had appeared and were taking their places: they were a strange assortment: two violins, a cello, a viola, a double bass, a flute, and an oboe.

They at once began, obviously before the proper time, to play a Weber overture. Right in front near the orchestra stood an old peasant, with a bald head and a sort of dark scarf round his neck. Perhaps, I thought, he was the figure ordained by fate to put on a pair of spectacles later on, go mad, and rush on to the stage. The daylight was now completely gone; the tall lanterns flickered a little, as a light wind had got up. There was much activity behind the shrubbery, and the cast were making their way along the hidden paths towards the stage. Then, for the first time, I thought of the others who were taking part in it, and it occurred to me that I had seen none of them except Herr von Umprecht, his children, and the forester's daughter. Then I heard the loud voice of the stage director and the laugh of the young Countess Saima. The benches were full, the Baron sat in one of the front rows and was talking to the Countess Saima. The orchestra struck up, the forester's daughter came forward and spoke the prologue. The theme of the piece was the fate of a man who, seized by a sudden longing for adventures and far-off lands, leaves his home without saying good-bye, and in the course of a day meets with so much grief and disaster that he proposes to go home before his wife and children have missed him; but a last adventure on his way back ends in his murder, and before he dies he has only time to greet his abandoned dear ones, to whom his flight and death are riddles without an answer.

The play had begun: both men and women spoke their parts attractively: the simple presentation of the simple episodes gave me pleasure, and, to begin with, I thought no more of Herr von Umprecht's story. At the end of the first act the orchestra again began to play, but there was such a noise of talking on the benches that no one listened. I myself was not sitting, I was standing, hidden from the company, rather near to the stage on the left side, where the road could be seen dipping down into the valley. The second act began; the wind had become rather stronger, and the flickering lights contributed not a little to the effect of the piece. The performers again disappeared among the trees and the orchestra began once more. At that moment I happened to glance at the flute-player who wore spectacles and was clean-shaven; but he had long white hair and there was no sign of a shawl. The music stopped and the performers again appeared on the stage. Then I noticed that the flute-player, who had laid his instrument on the stand in front of him, put his hand into his pocket and pulled out a large woollen shawl and wound it round his neck. I was extremely taken aback. The next moment Herr von Umprecht appeared. I saw his eyes suddenly fix upon the flute-player, I saw him mark the green shawl and falter for an instant: but he had soon pulled himself together and went on with his part unperturbed. I asked a roughly dressed young countryman near me if he knew the flute-player, and was told that he was a schoolmaster from Kaltem. The play progressed, and began to near its end. The two children wandered, as the play directs, across the stage; there was a noise of tumult in the forest that came gradually nearer, and shouts and cries were heard: not inappropriately, the wind grew stronger, and the branches began to sway: and at last Herr von Umprecht, the dying knight-errant, was carried on to the stage. The two children rushed up, and the torch-bearers stood motionless at the side. The wife came in later than the rest, and with a face distorted by anguish, sank down by the side of the murdered man: he wants to open his lips once more, tries to raise himself up, but — as it was written in the play — he fails. At that moment came a tremendous gust of wind that threatened to extinguish the torches: I see someone jumping to his feet in the orchestra — it is flute-player — to my amazement he is bald, his wig has been blown off, and with his green shawl streaming from

his neck, he rushes at the stage. Unconsciously I glanced at Umprecht: his wide eyes were fixed on the man with something like ecstasy: he tried to speak... it was clear he could not, and he sank down once more. Many of the audience still thought that all this was part of the play: I myself was not certain what to make of Umprecht's second collapse: meanwhile the man had passed the bier, still in pursuit of his wig, and disappeared into the forest. Umprecht did not move; a fresh gust of wind put out one of the two torches: a few people right in front became uneasy — I heard the Baron saying "Hush!" All was silent again — even the wind had dropped... but Umprecht still lay full length; he did not stir nor move his lips. The Countess Saima shrieked — and the audience thought that this was part of the play. But I, elbowing my way through the people, rushed on to the stage, while I could hear a growing disturbance behind me. Everyone got up, and some followed me; the bier was surrounded.... "What is the matter? what has happened?"... I snatched a torch from the hand of one of the torch-bearers and lit up the face of the prostrate man.... I shook him and tore open his shirt. Meantime, the doctor had appeared beside me; he sounded Herr Umprecht's heart, felt his pulse, told everyone to stand aside, whispered a few words to the Baron.... The wife of the man on the bier forced her way through the throng, shrieked, flung herself over her husband; the children stood by as though turned to stone, and could not understand.... No one would believe what had happened, and yet they were all telling each other — and a minute later it was known among all the company that Herr von Umprecht had died suddenly on the bier on which he had been carried on to the stage....

I hurried down into the valley the same evening, completely overcome with horror. I was in such a shaken condition that I could not bring myself to go inside the castle again. I spoke to the Baron the following day in Botzen; there I told him Umprecht's story, as Umprecht himself had told it to me. The Baron would not believe it; I felt in my pocket-book and showed him the mysterious paper: he looked at me with astonishment, even with concern, and gave me back the sheet — it was white, not a sign of any writing or drawing....

I made attempts to find Marco Polo; but all I could discover about him was that he had appeared for the last time three years ago in a low-class Hamburg music-hall.

But among so many mysteries, the greatest mystery of all is the fact that the schoolmaster, who ran after his wig with outstretched hands and disappeared into the forest, was never seen again; not so much as his corpse was ever found.

Editor's Note: —

I was not personally acquainted with the editor of the foregoing narrative. He was in his time a rather well-known author, but had almost entirely dropped out when he died ten years ago at the age of scarcely sixty. As he left no special directions, all his papers came into the hands of his old friend in Meran, mentioned in the narrative. From this friend, a doctor, with whom during a stay in Meran last winter I used at times to discuss such dark matters as ghosts, telepathy, and second-sight, I received the manuscript that is here reproduced. I should gladly regard the whole story as a work of the imagination, had not the doctor, as appears in the narrative, been present at the performance described at the end, with its strange dénouement, and also been personally acquainted with the schoolmaster who disappeared so mysteriously. As regards the magician, Marco Polo, I remember very well when I was quite a young man seeing his name on a theatre notice while I was on a holiday at the Wörthersee: it remained in my memory because just at that time I was about to read that famous traveller's description of his journeys.

BLIND GERONIMO AND HIS BROTHER



BLIND GERONIMO GOT UP FROM THE BENCH AND reached for his guitar which was lying ready on the table near his wine-glass. He had heard the distant rumbling of the first carriage. He felt his familiar way to the open door, and then went down the narrow wooden stairway that led into the covered courtyard. His brother followed him, and they then placed themselves close to the stairs, with their backs to the wall, so as to be sheltered against the damp cold wind that swept over the muddy ground through the open gates.

All the carriages that went by the Stelvio Pass had to drive under the gloomy archway of the old inn. It was the last stopping-place, before the top, for travellers going from Italy to Tyrol. It did not invite a long stay for the road here was fairly level, without views, and ran between barren heights. The blind Italian, and his brother Carlo, almost made the place their home during the summer months.

The mail-coach drove in and other carriages soon followed it. Most of the travellers stayed in their seats, well wrapped up in shawls and cloaks, others got out and marched impatiently up and down between the gates. The weather grew continually worse, and a chilly rain began to patter down. After a succession of lovely days, it seemed as though autumn had broken suddenly and all too soon.

The blind man sang, and accompanied himself on his guitar: he sang in an uneven voice, which sometimes rose into something like a shriek, as indeed it always did when he had been drinking. Sometimes he turned his face upwards with an expression of fruitless entreaty. But the lineaments of his face, with its short, stubby beard and its bluish lips, remained completely immobile. The other brother stood beside him, always motionless. When someone dropped a coin in the hat he nodded his thanks, and looked into the giver's face with a quick, almost puzzled look. But then, as though in fear, he looked away again, and stared like his brother into the void. It seemed as though his eyes were ashamed of the light that was granted to them, not one ray of which could he give to his blind brother.

"Get me some wine," said Geronimo, and Carlo went, obedient as ever. While he was walking up the stairs, Geronimo began to sing again. He had long ceased to listen to his own voice, so he was able to notice what went on around him. At that moment he caught two whispering voices, those of a young man and a young woman. He wondered how often these two had travelled back and forward over this road; for in his blindness and his half-fuddled state, it often seemed to him as though the same people came over the Pass day after day, first from north to south and then from south to north. So he had known this young couple for a long time.

Carlo came down and handed Geronimo a glass of wine. The blind man raised his glass to the young couple and said: "Here's your good health!"

"Thanks," said the young man; but the girl drew him away, for the blind man made her feel uncomfortable.

Then a carriage drove in with a rather noisy company: father, mother, three children, and a nurse.

"Germans," said Geronimo softly to Carlo.

The father gave each child a coin, which they were to throw into the beggar's hat. The eldest boy peered into the blind man's face with fearful curiosity. Carlo watched the boy. Whenever he saw a child like this he could not help remembering that Geronimo had been just that age at the time of the accident which had cost him his sight. Even now, after nearly twenty years, he could recollect that day with perfect clarity. His ears still rang with that shrill childish shriek with which little Geronimo had fallen on the grass, he could still see the flickering circles of sunlight on the white garden wall, and hear once more the Sunday bells which rang

out at that moment.

As he had often done before, he had been shooting with his air-gun at the ash tree by the wall, and when he heard the shriek he at once thought he must have wounded his little brother who had just run past. He dropped his gun, jumped through the window into the garden, and dashed towards his little brother, who lay on the grass, wailing, with his hands clasped to his face. Blood was flowing down his right cheek and his neck. At the same moment their father came home from the fields through the little garden gate, and they both knelt helplessly by the wailing child. Neighbours hurried up; the old Vanetti woman was the first to succeed in getting the boy's hand away from his face. Then the blacksmith appeared, to whom Carlo was apprenticed; he had some medical knowledge and he saw at once that the right eye was lost. The doctor, who came from Poschiavo in the evening, could I do no more. He even pointed out the danger to the other eye: and he was right. A year later the world, for Geronimo, was swallowed up in darkness. At first they tried to convince him that he could be cured later on, and he seemed to believe it. Carlo, who knew the truth, wandered day and night up and down the roads, among the vineyards and the forests, and was on the verge of killing himself. But the priest in whom he confided pointed out that it was his duty to live and to devote his life to his brother. Carlo understood. He was seized with a great pity. Only when he was with the blind boy, when he could stroke his hair and kiss his forehead, tell him stories, and take him for walks in the fields behind the house, and among the vine-trellises, did his pain find any relief.

To begin with he had neglected his hours of work at the blacksmith's, because he would not be separated from his brother, and afterwards he could not bring himself to start again, though his father warned him and he worried over it. One day it occurred to Carlo that Geronimo had entirely given up talking of his accident. He soon knew why: the blind boy had realised that he would never again see the sky, the hills, the streets, the people and the light. Carlo was then more miserable than ever, though he tried hard to comfort himself by the thought that the accident was entirely unintentional on his part. And often and often, when he looked at his brother in the early morning, lying beside him, he was so terrified of seeing him awake that he ran out into the garden so as not to be there when the dead eyes seemed each day to seek once more the light which had gone from them for ever. It was at this time that Carlo had the notion that Geronimo, who had a pleasant voice, should take up music. The schoolmaster of Tola, who often came over on Sunday, taught him to play the guitar. The blind boy had certainly no idea that this newly learnt art was to serve him one day as a means of livelihood.

With that summer's day misfortune seemed to have settled for ever on the house of old Lagardi. The harvest failed one year after another, and the old man was cheated by relatives out of a small sum of money that he had saved: and when, on a sultry day of August, he was seized by an apoplectic fit in the fields and fell down dead, he left nothing but debts. The little property was sold: the two brothers were homeless and destitute and left the village.

Carlo was twenty and Geronimo fifteen. Then began the wandering beggars' existence which they had led until that day. At first Carlo had thought of finding some kind of work that would support his brother and himself; but he did not succeed. Besides, Geronimo was never at peace; he must always be on the move.

For twenty years now they had wandered about the roads and passes of North Italy and South Tyrol, always where the stream of travellers was thickest.

And if, after so many years, Carlo no longer felt the burning torment with which every ray of sunlight, the view of every pleasant landscape used to fill his heart, there was still a gnawing pity within him, insistent and unsuspected, like the rhythm of his heart and breath. And he was glad when Geronimo got drunk.

The carriage with the German family had driven away. Carlo sat down, as he liked to do, on the lowest

step of the stairway, but Geronimo remained standing, dropped his arms limply to his side, and turned his face upwards.

Maria, the maid, came out of the inn-parlour.

"Had a good day?" she called down to them.

Carlo did not turn. The blind man bent over his glass, raised it from the ground and drank to Maria. She often sat beside him of an evening in the inn-parlour and he knew that she was pretty.

Carlo leaned forward and looked out towards the road. The wind blew, and the rain hissed down, and the rumble of an approaching carriage was lost in the noise and tumult. Carlo stood up and took his place again by his brother's side.

Geronimo began to sing, just as the carriage drove in: it contained only one passenger. The driver quickly unharnessed the horses and then hurried towards the inn-parlour. The traveller remained for a while sitting in his corner, quite enveloped in a grey mackintosh: he did not seem to be listening to the singing. After a while he jumped out of the carriage and hurriedly paced up and down, without going very far away from the carriage. He kept on rubbing his hands together to warm himself. Then he seemed to notice the beggars for the first time. He stopped in front of them, and stared at them for a while in a searching sort of way. Carlo inclined his head slightly, as if in salutation. The traveller was a very young man, with a pleasant, clean-shaven face, and restless eyes. After he had stood some time in front of the two beggars, he again hurried to the gate, through which he was to drive forth once more, and shook his head with annoyance at the cheerless prospect of rain and water.

"Well?" said Geronimo.

"Nothing yet," answered Carlo. "He'll probably give us something when he starts out again."

The traveller came back and leaned against the pole of his carriage. The blind man began to sing, and the young man suddenly seemed to be listening with great interest. The ostler appeared and began to put the horses in again. And it was not until then, as though he had just thought of it, the young man felt in his pocket and gave Carlo a franc.

"Thank you kindly, sir," said Carlo.

The traveller took his seat in the carriage and wrapped himself in his cloak once more. Carlo picked up his glass and went up the wooden stairway. Geronimo began another song. The traveller leaned out of the carriage and shook his head with an expression of mingled contempt and sadness. Suddenly a fancy seemed to take him, and he smiled. Then he said to the blind man, who was only a pace or two away from him:

"What is your name?"

"Geronimo."

"Well, Geronimo, don't let yourself be cheated." At that moment the coachman appeared on the top step of the stairway.

"How do you mean, sir?"

"I gave your companion a twenty-franc piece."

"Oh, thank you, sir, thank you."

"Well, but you be careful."

"He's my brother, sir: he wouldn't cheat me."

The young man hesitated for a moment, but while he was still reflecting the coachman had got on to his box and whipped up the horses. The young man leaned back, with a jerk of his head that seemed to say "Fate, take your course," and the carriage drove off.

The blind man waved his hands after him with animated gestures of gratitude. Then he heard Carlo coming

out of the inn-parlour. Carlo called down: “Come on, Geronimo, it’s warm up here. Maria has made a fire.”

Geronimo nodded, took his guitar under his arm, and felt his way up the steps by the banister. While he was on his way he called out: “Let me feel it, it’s a long time since I’ve touched a gold piece.”

“What’s the matter?” said Carlo. “What are you talking about?”

Geronimo had reached the top and felt with both hands for his brother’s head, a gesture that with him always meant joy or affection. “Carlo, my dear brother, there are still some good people in the world.”

“Of course,” said Carlo. “Two lire and thirty centimes so far, and a little Austrian money — about half a lira.”

“And twenty francs, twenty francs,” cried Geronimo. “I know all about it!” He stumbled into the room and sat down heavily on a bench.

“What do you know?” asked Carlo.

“Oh, stop that, do! Give it to me to hold. It is so long since I had a gold piece in my hand.”

“What do you mean? How should I get hold of a gold piece? Here are two or three lire.”

The blind man brought his fist down on the table. “Stop that fooling, I tell you! Are you trying to hide something from me?”

Carlo looked at his brother with a troubled and astonished expression. He sat down beside him, moved up close and took his arm as if to try and soothe him. “I’m not hiding anything from you. How can you think such a thing? How should anyone give me a gold piece?”

“But he told me so.”

“Who did?”

“The young man who was walking up and down.”

“What? I don’t understand.”

“He asked me what my name was, and then he said: ‘Don’t you let yourself be cheated.’”

“You must have dreamt it, Geronimo — it’s nonsense!”

“Nonsense, is it? I heard it, and I can hear quite well: ‘Don’t you let yourself be cheated. I gave him a gold piece.’ No, he said: ‘I gave him a twenty-franc piece.’”

The landlord came in. “Well,” said he, “and what’s the matter with you two? Have you gone out of business? A coach with four horses has just come in.”

“Come along,” cried Carlo.

Geronimo did not move. “Why should I come? What’s the use? You stand there and—”

Carlo took his hand. “Be quiet now and come along!”

Geronimo said no more and obeyed his brother. But on the steps he said: “I haven’t done with you.”

Carlo did not understand what had happened. Had Geronimo suddenly gone mad? He certainly flew into a rage very easily, but he had never talked like this.

Two Englishmen were sitting in the carriage that had just arrived; Carlo raised his hat to them, and the blind man sang. One of the Englishmen had got out and flung a few coins into Carlo’s hat. Carlo said “Thank you,” and then, as if to himself, “Twenty centesimi.” Geronimo’s face remained unmoved: he began a new song. The carriage with the two Englishmen drove off.

The brothers went silently up the steps. Geronimo sat down on the bench, Carlo remained standing by the stove.

“Why don’t you speak?” asked Geronimo.

“Well,” said Carlo, “it happened just as I said.” His voice trembled a little.

“What was it you said?” asked Geronimo.

“Perhaps he was mad.”

“Mad? I dare say! When someone says ‘I gave your brother twenty francs,’ he’s mad, is he? And why did he say ‘Don’t you let yourself be cheated,’ eh?”

“Perhaps he wasn’t mad; but there are people who like to play tricks on poor people.”

“Tricks!” screamed Geronimo. “Of course you had to say that — I was waiting for that!” He emptied the glass of wine that stood in front of him.

“But, Geronimo!” cried Carlo, and in his confusion he could hardly speak. “Why should I... how can you believe...?”

“Why is your voice trembling... eh?... Tell me that.”

“Geronimo, I swear, I...”

“Eh?... and I don’t believe you. And now you’re laughing... I know you’re laughing.”

Here the ostler shouted from below: “Hullo, you up there, some people have come.”

The brothers stood up quite mechanically and walked down the stairs. Two carriages had arrived at the same time, one with three men, and the other with an old married couple. Geronimo sang; Carlo stood beside him, utterly bewildered. What should he do now? His brother did not believe him? How could that be possible? And he threw a nervous side-long glance at Geronimo who was singing his songs in a cracked voice. It seemed as though strange thoughts were sweeping across his brother’s forehead, thoughts that he had never observed there before.

The carriages had already gone, but Geronimo went on singing. Carlo did not dare to interrupt him. He did not know what he could say, and he feared that his voice might tremble again. Then he heard a burst of laughter from above, and Maria called out: “What are you still singing for? You won’t get anything from me!”

Geronimo stopped in the middle of a phrase: it sounded as though his voice and the strings had cracked at the same moment. Then he went up the steps again and Carlo followed him. He sat down beside him in the parlour. What should he do? He could do nothing except try and explain it over again.

“Geronimo,” he said, “I swear to you... think, Geronimo, how can you believe that I...”

Geronimo was silent: his dead eyes seemed to stare out through the window into the grey mist. Carlo went on: “Well, perhaps he wasn’t mad, he may have been mistaken... yes, he will have been mistaken....” But he knew quite well that he did not believe what he was saying.

Geronimo moved away impatiently. But Carlo went on, with sudden animation: “Why should I — you know I don’t eat and drink any more than you do, and when I buy a new coat you know all about it.... Why should I need so much money?... What should I do with it?”

And Geronimo answered, spitting out the words:

“Don’t tell lies. I know you’re telling lies!”

“I’m not telling lies, Geronimo,” said Carlo, alarmed.

“Eh? You’ve given it to her already, have you? Or will she get it later on?”

“Maria?”

“Who else? You liar! you thief!”

And as though he no longer wanted to sit beside his brother at the table, he pushed him away with his elbow.

Carlo stood up. At first he stared at his brother, then he left the room and went down the steps into the yard. With staring eyes he looked out at the road, which disappeared into a brownish fog. The rain had stopped. Carlo put his hands in his pockets and went out. He felt as though his brother had driven him away.

What had happened?... He still could not realise it. What sort of man could that person have been? He had given one franc and said it was twenty. He must have had some reason?... And Carlo tried to think if he had somewhere made an enemy who had sent the stranger to take, vengeance.... But as far back as he could remember, he had never offended any man or had had a serious quarrel with anyone. For twenty years he had done nothing but stand in inn-yards or by the roadside with his hat in his hand.

... Perhaps someone had a grudge against him over a woman.... But it was long since he had had anything to do with a woman.... The waitress at La Rosa had been the last one, in the previous spring... but surely no one could have taken offence at that... it was not conceivable!... There must be people in the world that he did not know. This stranger must have had some motive for telling Geronimo that he had given his brother twenty francs.... Surely.... But what was he to do now?.... It was suddenly clear that Geronimo distrusted him... and that he could not bear! He must do something to stop it.... And he hurried back.

When he went into the parlour again Geronimo lay outstretched on the bench and did not seem to notice Carlo's entrance. Maria brought them food and drink. They did not utter a word during the meal. When Maria was taking the plates away, Geronimo suddenly burst into a laugh and said:

"What are you going to buy with it?"

"With what?"

"A new petticoat, or some earrings?"

"What's he talking about?" she said, turning to Carlo.

In the meantime there was a loud rumble of heavily-laden vehicles below in the yard, a din of voices reached them, and Maria hurried down. After a few minutes three drivers came in and sat down at a table: the landlord went up and greeted them. They were cursing the bad weather.

"There will be snow to-night," said one.

The second told how he had been snowed up in the Pass in the middle of August ten years before and almost frozen to death. Maria sat down with them. Then the ostler came in and asked after his parents who lived down in Bormio.

At that moment a carriage with travellers arrived. Geronimo and Carlo went down, Geronimo sang, Carlo held out his hat, and the travellers gave them alms. Geronimo seemed perfectly quiet now. Several times he asked "How much?" and nodded slightly at Carlo's answers. In the meantime Carlo himself tried to collect his thoughts. But his only feeling was a dull conviction that something dreadful had happened, and that he was quite helpless.

When the brothers went up the stairs again, they heard the confused talk and laughter of the drivers up above. The youngest of them shouted out to Geronimo "Sing us something, we'll pay you for it — won't we?" and turned towards the others.

Maria, who had just come in with a bottle of red wine, said: "Let him alone to-day, he's in a bad temper."

Instead of answering, Geronimo stood in the centre of the room and began to sing. When he had finished, the drivers clapped their hands.

"Come here, Carlo," cried one of them, "we want to throw our money into your hat like the people down below." And he took a small coin, and raised his hand as though to drop it in the hat which Carlo held out to him. Then the blind man reached up for the driver's arm and said: "Give it to me, give it to me; it might drop..."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, it might drop between Maria's legs!"

They all laughed, including the landlord and Maria; only Carlo stood there motionless. Never had

Geronimo made such jokes!...

"Sit down with us," cried the drivers. "You're a good fellow, you are," and they pushed closer together so as to make room for Geronimo. Their talk became louder and more confused. Geronimo talked too, louder and more gaily than usual, and never stopped drinking. When Maria came down again he tried to pull her to him; one of the drivers laughed and said: "Perhaps you think she's beautiful — why, she's ugly and old."

But the blind man pulled Maria down on to his knee. "You're all fools," he said. "Do you think I need my eyes to see? I know where Carlo is now — eh? — he's standing over by the stove, with his hands in his trouser pockets, and laughing."

They all looked at Carlo, who was leaning against the stove with his mouth open and did actually screw his face into a grin, as if he did not dare to give his brother the lie.

The ostler came in, and said that if the drivers wanted to get to Bormio before it was dark, they would have to hurry. They got up and went out with a clatter. The two brothers were again alone in the inn-parlour. It was the time when as often as not they were in the habit of sleeping. It was the early afternoon and silence used to fall upon the inn at that hour. Geronimo, with his head on the table, seemed to sleep. Carlo began by pacing up and down, then he sat on the bench. He was very tired. He felt as though he were involved in a wearisome dream. He had to think of all manner of things: of yesterday, and the day before, and all the days that had been, and especially of the warm summer days and the white country roads where his brother and he used to wander; and everything seemed so far away and strange, as though it could never be so again.

Late in the afternoon the mail coach from Tyrol arrived, and afterwards at short intervals carriages, also taking the same way to the south. Four times more the brothers had to go down into the courtyard. When they went up the last time dusk had fallen and the little oil lamp that hung down from the ceiling was spluttering. Workmen came in who were employed in a stone quarry near by, and had put up their wooden hutments a hundred yards or so below the inn. Geronimo joined them. Carlo remained alone at the table. He felt as though he had been alone for a very long time.

He heard Geronimo on the other side of the room talking loudly about his young days — indeed, he was nearly shouting — how he still remembered all sorts of things he had seen with his eyes — persons and objects, his father working in the fields, the little garden with the ash tree against the wall, the low house that was theirs, the shoemaker's two little daughters, the vineyard behind the church, even his own boyish face as it had looked at him out of a mirror. How often Carlo had heard it all; to-day he could not bear it. The words had a different ring; and every one that Geronimo uttered seemed to have a new meaning, and to be aimed at him.

He crept out and again went on to the road which now lay in complete darkness. The rain had stopped. The air was very cold, and Carlo was suddenly tempted to go farther and even farther into the darkness, and at last to lie down somewhere in a ditch, sleep, and never wake again.

All at once he heard the rumble of a carriage, and saw the gleam of two lanterns coming nearer and nearer. In the carriage that passed him sat two men. One of them, who had a small clean-shaven face, started with fright when Carlo's form rose up out of the darkness in the light of the lanterns. Carlo stood still and raised his hat. The carriage and the lights disappeared. Carlo again stood in the profound blackness. Suddenly he felt terrified. For the first time fn his life the darkness frightened him. He felt as though he could not bear it for another minute. In some strange way the fear that he felt for himself was confused in his dulled intelligence with an agonizing pity for his blind brother, and he felt impelled to go home.

When he went into the inn-parlour he saw the two travellers who had passed him on the road, sitting at a it table over a bottle of red wine and talking very earnestly together. They hardly looked up when he came in.

At the other table sat Geronimo still among the labourers.

"Where have you been?" said the landlord to him at the door. "Why do you leave your brother alone?"

"What's the matter?" asked Carlo in alarm.

"Geronimo is treating everybody. Of course it's all one to me, but you should remember that bad times will be round again soon."

Carlo went quickly over to his brother and took him by the arm. "Come along," he said.

"What do you want?" shouted Geronimo.

"Come to bed," said Carlo.

"Go away and let me alone! *I* earn the money — I can do what I like with my own money — eh? You can't pocket all of it. You think he gives it all to me! Oh, no! I'm a blind man! But there are people — good people — who say to me, 'I've given your brother twenty francs.'"

The labourers burst out laughing.

"That will do," said Carlo. "Come along!" and he took his brother off, almost dragged him up the stairway to the bare garret where they lay. And the whole way Geronimo screamed: "Yes, now it's all come out, now I know all about it. You just wait. Where is she? Where is Maria? Or are you putting it in the Savings Bank for her — eh? I sing for you, I play the guitar, you live on me — and you are a thief!" and he collapsed on to the straw mattress.

A dim light glimmered from the corridor; on the other side of it, the door of the only guest room in the inn stood open, and Maria was putting the beds in order for the night. Carlo stood by his brother and watched him as he lay, with bloated face and bluish lips, his damp hair sticking to his forehead, looking years older than he really was. And slowly he began to understand. His blind brother's mistrust was not a thing of to-day, it must have long been slumbering within him, and he had wanted only the occasion, or perhaps the courage, to express it openly. And everything that Carlo had done for him was in vain: vain was his remorse, vain the sacrifice of his whole life. What should he do now? Should he go on, day after day, for who knows how long, leading him through his endless night, watching over him, begging for him, with no other reward than mistrust and abuse? If his brother looked on him as a thief, any stranger would do as well or better than himself. It would probably be wisest to leave him alone, and part from him forever. Then Geronimo would learn how unjust he had been, then he would find out for the first time what it means to be betrayed and robbed, abandoned and wretched. And what was he to do? He was not yet old; and if he were alone he could make a start at several things. As an ostler he could always earn his keep anywhere.

But while these thoughts passed through his head, his eyes remained fixed upon his brother, and he suddenly saw him sitting by himself on a stone at the side of a sunlit road, staring with wide-open eyes up to the heaven that could not blind him and groping in the darkness that always hemmed him in. And he felt that as the blind man had no one in the world but himself so he had no one but his brother. He understood that his love for his brother was the whole meaning of his life, and for the first time it flashed upon his mind that only his faith that the blind man returned his love and had forgiven him had made it possible for him to bear his misery so patiently. He could not at a stroke renounce this hope. He felt that he needed his brother just as deeply as his brother needed him. He could not and he would not leave him. He must either endure his mistrust or find some means to convince the blind man of the groundlessness of his suspicions.

... If only he could somehow lay his hands on a gold piece. If he could say to the blind man early next morning: "I only put it away so that you wouldn't drink it all with the labourers — or, so that you wouldn't be robbed of it..." or something of that sort.

Footsteps approached up the wooden stairs; the travellers were going to their beds. Suddenly an idea

flashed through his head: he would knock at the door opposite, tell the strangers the exact truth of what had happened to-day and ask for the twenty francs. And yet he realised at once that it would be futile: they would not believe a word of his story, and he remembered how the pale one had started with terror when he, Carlo, had suddenly appeared out of the darkness in front of the carriage.

He stretched himself out on the straw mattress. It was quite dark in the room. He could hear the labourers talking loudly and then going down the wooden stairs with heavy steps. Soon after that both the gates were shut. Once more the ostler went up the stairs and down again, and then all was still. Carlo could hear nothing but Geronimo's snoring. Soon his thoughts began to move in the labyrinths of dreams. When he awoke it was still pitch dark. He looked towards the place where the window was; and when he strained his eyes he was aware of a dark grey square in the centre of the impenetrable blackness. Geronimo was still sleeping the heavy sleep of a drunken man, and Carlo thought of the day that was to be the morrow and he shuddered. He thought of the night after that day, of the day after that night, of the future that lay before him, and he was filled with horror of the loneliness that he must face. Why had he not been braver that evening? Why had he not gone to the strangers and asked them for twenty francs? Perhaps they would have taken pity on him. And yet, it was perhaps just as well he had not asked them. But why?... He sat up suddenly and felt his heart beating. He now knew why. If they had refused him, he must have been under suspicion, but now... he stared at the grey patch that began to shine dimly.... This that had come into his head against his will was impossible, quite impossible.... The door opposite was fastened, and besides they might wake up.... Yes, there it was — that grey luminous patch in the centre of the darkness was the new day.

Carlo got up, as if something were driving him thither, and laid his forehead against the cold window-pane. Why had he got up?... To think it over?... To make the attempt?... What!... It was impossible and besides it was a crime. A crime?... What do twenty francs mean to such people who travel a thousand miles for their pleasure? They would not so much as miss it. He went to the door and opened it gently. The other door was opposite — two paces away — shut. Some clothes were hanging from a nail in the door post. Carlo passed his hand over them....

Yes, if people left their purses in their pockets, life would be very simple, soon no one would have to go begging.... But the pockets were empty. What could he do now? He had better go back to his room, to the straw mattress. Perhaps there was some better way of getting hold of twenty francs — less dangerous and more honest. If he merely kept back every time a few centimes from what was given them, until he had saved up twenty francs, and then change it all for a gold piece.... But how long would that take?... Months, perhaps a year. Ah, if he only had the courage. He was still standing in the passage. He looked across at the door.... What was that vertical streak from the top to the floor level? Was it possible? The door was only pushed to, it was not locked?... Why was he surprised?... For months past it had been impossible to lock the door. How was that? He remembered; it had only been occupied three times last summer, twice by journeymen and once by a tourist who had hurt his foot. The door did not shut; all he needed now was courage — yes, and luck. The worst that could happen to him was that they might both wake up, and even then he could always find an excuse. He peered through the crack into the room. It was still so dark that he could only recognise the outlines of the two figures on the beds. He listened: they were breathing quietly and evenly. Carlo opened the door gently, and entered the room on his bare feet without a sound. Both the beds lay lengthwise against the wall opposite the window. In the centre of the room was a table. Carlo crept up to it. He ran his hand across the top and felt a bunch of keys, a penknife, a small book — no more. Why, of course!... How could he imagine they would put their money on the table? Well, he had better go away at once now.... And yet, one bold stroke perhaps, and all would be well. He approached the bed nearest to the door. Something was lying

on the chair — he felt for it — it was a revolver.

... Carlo started.... Perhaps he had better keep it. Why had the man put his revolver ready? If he awoke and noticed him... No, he would simply say: “Three o’clock, sir; time to get up!” and he left the revolver where it lay.

He crept further into the room. On the other chair, among some underclothes... God! there it was... a purse... he held it in his hand.... At that instant he heard a faint creak. With a quick movement he lay down full length at the foot of the bed.... Another creak — a sound of deep breathing, a clearing of the throat — then all was silent, profoundly silent. Carlo stayed where he was on the floor, with the purse in his hand, and waited. Not a sound or a movement. Already the pale light of dawn began to fill the room. Carlo did not dare to stand up: he crawled along the floor towards the door, which was wide enough open to let him through; he crawled right out into the passage, and not until then did he get up slowly, drawing a deep breath.

He opened the purse: it had three compartments, in the left and right of which were only small silver coins. Carlo then opened the middle one, which was shut by a catch of its own, and felt three twenty-franc pieces. For an instant he thought of taking two of them, but he quickly put the temptation from him, took out one gold piece only and shut the purse. Then he knelt down, looked through the crack into the room, in which all was absolutely still, and gave the purse a push so that it slid under the second bed. When the stranger awoke he must of course think that it had fallen down from the chair. Carlo got up slowly. The floor creaked slightly, and at that moment he heard a voice from within: “What is it? What’s the matter?” Carlo hastily made two steps backward, holding his breath, and slipped into his own room. He was safe now, and he listened.... The bed in the room opposite creaked again, and then all was still. Between his fingers he held the piece of gold. He had done it! He had the twenty francs and now he could say to his brother “You see now I’m not a thief,” and to-day they could start on their wanderings again — southwards to Bormio, then on through the Valtelline... To Tirano... to Edole... to Breno, to Lake Iseo, as they had done last year.... There would be nothing suspicious about it, for the day before yesterday he had said to the landlord, “We’re going down south in a few days.”

It was growing lighter, and the whole room glimmered in the grey dawn. Oh, if only Geronimo would wake up soon! It was so pleasant walking in the early morning. They would start before sunrise. Good morning to the landlord, the ostler, and Maria, and then away.... And not until they were two hours distant, and near the valley, would he tell Geronimo.

Geronimo stretched himself and turned over. Carlo called to him, “Geronimo!”

“Well, what is it?” and he sat up, propping himself on his elbows.

“Geronimo, we must get up.”

“Why?” and he turned His dead eyes towards his brother. Carlo knew that he was calling to mind what had happened yesterday, but he also knew that his brother would not say another word about it until he was drunk again.

“It’s cold, Geronimo; we must go. It won’t get any better here, and I think we should go. We could be in Boladore by midday.”

Geronimo heaved himself up. The noises of the awakening house were already audible. Down in the yard the landlord was talking to the ostler. Carlo stood up and went downstairs. He was always awake early and often went out into the road before the dawn had broken. He went up to the landlord and said: “We’re going off.”

“So soon?” said the landlord.

“Yes, it’s bitter cold standing here in the yard, and the wind goes through you.”

“Well, remember me to Baldetti when you get to Bormio, and tell him not to forget to send me the oil.”

“All right. And... how much for our beds last night?”

“That’s all right, Carlo,” said the landlord. “I’ll present your brother with the twenty centimes. I listened to him too. Good-bye.”

“Thanks,” said Carlo. “But we aren’t in such a hurry as all that. We’ll see you when you come back from the sheds. Bormio won’t move, I don’t suppose.” He laughed and went up the wooden stairs.

Geronimo stood in the middle of the room and said: “Well, I’m ready to go.”

“Right,” said Carlo.

He took their few belongings from an old cupboard that stood in a corner of the room and packed them in a bundle. Then he said: “A fine day, but very cold.”

“I know it,” said Geronimo, and they left the room together.

“Go quietly,” said Carlo, “the two people who came last night are sleeping there.” They walked carefully down the stairs. “The landlord asked me to say good-bye to you,” said Carlo. “He gave us the twenty centimes for last night. He’s gone out down to the sheds and won’t be back for two hours. But we shall see him again next year.”

Geronimo did not answer. They went out on to the main road which lay before them in the pale light of dawn. Carlo took his brother’s left arm, and both walked in silence down towards the valley. After a short stretch they reached the place where the road becomes a series of long-drawn-out curves. Mists rose up to meet them, and above them the heights seemed to be engulfed in cloud. And Carlo thought: “Now I will tell him.”

But Carlo did not say a word; he took the piece of gold out of his pocket and handed it to his brother. The latter took it between the fingers of his right hand, passed it over his cheek and his forehead, and at last nodded. “I knew it,” said he.

“Yes,” said Carlo, and looked at his brother with something like surprise.

“Even if the stranger hadn’t said anything about it, I should still have known it.”

“Yes,” said Carlo helplessly. “But you understand why, among all that crowd up there — I was afraid that you would get rid of it all at once. And, Geronimo, I thought it was time you bought a new coat for yourself, and a shirt and some shoes, I think. So that was why I...”

The blind man shook his head vigorously, “Why should I?” and he passed a hand over his coat. “Good enough, warm enough; now we shall soon be in the south.”

Carlo could not understand why Geronimo did not seem to be glad, and did not say he was sorry. And he went on: “Didn’t I do right, Geronimo? Now we have got it, haven’t we? If I’d told you up there, who knows.... I was quite right not to tell you, surely I was.”

Then Geronimo screamed out: “Stop telling lies, Carlo, I’ve had enough of it.”

Carlo stood still and let go of his brother’s arm. “I’m not telling lies.”

“I know very well you are! You’re always doing it.... You’ve told me hundreds of lies.... You wanted to keep this for yourself as well, but you were afraid, that’s what it was!”

Carlo bowed his head and said nothing. He took the blind man’s arm again and went on. It hurt him that Geronimo should speak so but he was quite astonished that he did not feel more upset.

The mists parted. After a long silence Geronimo said: “It is getting warm.” He spoke indifferently, in a matter-of-fact sort of way, as he had done a hundred times before, and at that moment Carlo felt that nothing had altered for Geronimo. For him he had always been a thief.

“Are you hungry yet?” he asked.

Geronimo nodded, and immediately took a piece of bread and cheese out of his coat pocket and began to eat. And they went on.

The mail from Bormio passed them. “Going down already?” the driver shouted to them. Then came other carriages, all going upwards.

“I can feel the air from the valley,” said Geronimo, and at that moment, after a sharp turn, the Valtelline lay at their feet.

Truly nothing had changed, thought Carlo.... Now I have actually stolen for him, and all to no purpose.

The mist below them was growing thinner, the sun’s rays tore holes in it. And Carlo thought: “Perhaps it was stupid to leave the inn so soon.... The purse is under the bed, which is in any case suspicious. But what did it all matter? Nothing worse could happen to him. His brother, the light of whose eyes he had destroyed, thought he had robbed him, thought he had done so for years, and would always think so — what worse could happen to him?

There below him lay the great white hotel, bathed in the radiance of the morning, and deeper down, where the valley began to widen out, the straggling village lay outstretched. The two went on in silence, and Carlo’s hand still lay on the blind man’s arm. They went past the grounds of the hotel, and on the terrace Carlo saw the guests sitting in light summer clothes over their breakfast.

“Where do you want to stop?” asked Carlo.

“At the ‘Eagle,’ of course, where we always do.”

When they got to the little inn at the end of the village they went inside. They sat down in the barroom and called for some wine.

“Why are you so early this year?” asked the landlord.

Carlo was rather alarmed by this question.

“Is it so early? It’s the 10th or 11th of September, isn’t it?”

“It was much later than this when you came down last year.”

“It’s so cold up above,” said Carlo. “We were frozen last night. By the way, I was to tell you not to forget to send up the oil.”

The air in the bar-room was heavy and thick. A strange restlessness fell upon Carlo: he wanted to be out in the open air again, on the main road that led to Tirano, to Edole, to Lake Iseo — far away into the distance. Suddenly he stood up.

“Are we going already?” asked Geronimo.

“We want to be in Boladore by midday — the carriages stop for a midday rest at the ‘Goat,’ it is a good place.”

And they went. The barber, Benozzi, stood smoking in front of his shop. “Good morning,” he shouted to them. “Well, what’s it like up there? I expect it snowed last night, didn’t it?”

“Yes, it did,” said Carlo and hurried on.

The village lay behind them. The white ribbon of the road wound among meadows and vineyards and along the rushing river. The sky was blue and still. “Why did I do it?” thought Carlo, and he glanced sidelong at the blind man. “His face looks just the same. He has always believed it — I have always been alone — and he has always hated me,” and it seemed to him as though he were walking and walking onward under a heavy load that he could not shake off; as though he could see the darkness through which Geronimo was walking at his side, while all the roads lay shining in the sunlight.

And they went on and on, hour after hour. From time to time Geronimo sat down upon a milestone, or they both leaned against the parapet of a bridge, to get some rest. They came to another village. Before the inn

carriages had stopped; travellers had got out and were walking up and down, but the two beggars did not stay. Out once more on to the open road. The sun rose higher and higher: it must be near noon. It was a day like a thousand others.

"The tower of Boladore," said Geronimo. Carlo looked up. He was surprised how accurately Geronimo could calculate distances: the tower of Boladore had in fact appeared on the horizon. Far away in the distance someone was coming towards them. It looked to Carlo as though he had been sitting by the roadside and had suddenly got up. The form came nearer. Then Carlo saw that it was a gendarme, one of those they so often met on the road. None the less Carlo was slightly alarmed. But as the man approached he recognised him and was reassured. It was Pietro Tenelli. Only last May the two beggars had sat with him in Ragazzi's inn in Morignone and heard him tell a dreadful story of how he had been nearly stabbed to death by a brigand.

"Someone has stopped," said Geronimo.

"Tenelli, the gendarme," said Carlo.

By now they had come up to him.

"Good morning, Herr Tenelli," said Carlo, and stopped.

"It so happens," said the gendarme, "that I've got to take both of you to the station at Boladore."

"Eh!" cried the blind man.

Carlo paled. "How is it possible?" he thought. "It can't be on that account. They can't know about that here yet."

"It seems to be on your way," said the gendarme, laughing, "so we may as well go together."

"Why don't you say something, Carlo?" asked Geronimo.

"Yes, yes, of course.... But, please, sir, how is it possible?... What have we... or rather what have I... truly I don't know...."

"Well, there it is. Perhaps you're innocent. How can I tell? In any case we've had a telegram at the station that we're to stop you because you're suspected, strongly suspected, of stealing some money up above there. Of course it's quite possible you didn't. So, come on!"

"Why don't you say something, Carlo?" asked Geronimo.

"Yes, yes... of course...."

"Oh, come along. There's no sense in standing here on the road. It's getting too hot. We shall be there in an hour. On with you!"

Carlo touched Geronimo's arm in his usual way, and they walked slowly on, the gendarme behind them.

"Carlo, why don't you speak?" asked Geronimo again.

"But what do you want me to say, Geronimo; what can I say? It will all come right. I myself don't know..." And suddenly it flashed across his mind: "Shall I tell him before we are brought into court?... No, it's no good. The gendarme would hear us.... Well, what does it matter? I shall tell the truth in court. 'Your Honor,' I shall say, 'this isn't an ordinary theft. This was how it happened....' And then he struggled to find the words to make his affair clear and intelligible to the court. "A gentleman down over the Pass yesterday... he may have been mad... or perhaps he was just mistaken... and this man..."

What nonsense! Who would believe it?... They would not even let him get so far. No one could, that foolish story... not even Geronimo. And he glanced sidelong at him. From old habit, the blind man's head moved up and down, as if keeping time to his walk, but his face was set, and his empty eyes stared into vacancy. And Carlo suddenly knew what kind of thoughts were moving behind that forehead...."'So that's how it is,' Geronimo must be thinking.... 'Carlo steals not only from me but from other people too.... Well, he can do it all right: he has eyes that can see and he uses them.' Yes, that's what Geronimo is thinking, sure

enough. They won't find any money on me, but that won't help me — neither with the judge nor with Geronimo. They'll lock me up, and him too.... Yes, him as well as me, as he's got the money."

And he could think no more, he felt so confused. It seemed as though he no longer understood a single thing about the whole affair and knew one thing alone: that he would gladly go to prison for a year or ten years, if only Geronimo might know that he, Carlo, had become a thief for his sake alone.

And suddenly Geronimo stood still, and Carlo had to stop also.

"Now what's the matter?" said the gendarme irritably. "Get on, do!" But he saw with surprise that the blind man had let fall his guitar, raised his arms, and was groping with both hands for his brother's cheeks. Then he brought his lips close to Carlo's mouth, who did not at first realise what was happening, and kissed him.

"Are you crazy?" asked the gendarme. "Come along, both of you. I don't want to stand here and get roasted."

Geronimo picked up the guitar, without uttering a word. Carlo took a deep breath and again laid his hand on the blind man's arm. Was it possible? Was his brother no longer angry with him? Did he at last understand? And he looked at his brother with a doubtful sidelong glance.

"Come on!" shouted the gendarme, "I'm sick of this," and he gave Carlo a jab in the ribs.

And Carlo, still guiding his brother with a firm grip on his arm, went on once more: and he walked at a much faster pace. For he saw Geronimo smile a gentle radiant smile that he had never seen on his brother's face since the days of his boyhood. And Carlo smiled too. He felt as though nothing evil could happen to him any more — neither in the police court, nor anywhere in the world. He had found his brother again — or, rather, he had found him for the first time.

ANDREAS THAMEYER'S LAST LETTER



I CANNOT POSSIBLY GO ON LIVING; FOR SO LONG AS I am alive people will despise me and no one will realise the truth. But the truth is that my wife was faithful — I swear it by all that I hold sacred, and I seal it with my death.

I have read a number of books dealing with these difficult and mysterious matters, and if there are persons who find such things essentially incredible, on the other hand there are scholars of importance who are entirely convinced, and I propose here and now to bring forward some instances that to every unprejudiced person must seem irresistible.

Malebranche relates that a certain woman, upon the occasion of the canonisation ceremonies of the blessed Pius, looked at his portrait so intently that the boy which she soon after brought into the world was exactly like the saint; his face showed all the tired lines of old age, his arms were crossed over his chest, his eyes turned up to heaven, and, over and above all this, the saint's voluminous cowl appeared in the form of a birthmark on his shoulder. But if, in spite of the authority of the witness, a disciple of the famous philosopher, Descartes, anyone should consider this story insufficiently confirmed, perhaps he will be satisfied with Martin Luther's evidence. Luther, in fact — as may be read in his table-talk — knew a citizen of Wittenberg with a head like a skull, and it was proved that the mother of this unfortunate man had been greatly shocked by the sight of a corpse during her pregnancy. But the story that seems to me the most significant and offers no reasonable ground for doubt is recorded by Heliodorous in the Libri Aethiopicorum. According to this esteemed author, the Queen Persina, after a childless marriage of ten years, bore her husband, Hydaspes, king of the Aethiopians, a white daughter, which, from fear of her husband's probable wrath, she caused to be exposed immediately after its birth: but with the child was a girdle on which was set out the true cause of this mysterious occurrence. In the garden of the royal palace, where the queen received the embraces of her dusky consort, there were magnificent marble statues of Greek gods and goddesses, which had been the objects of Persina's enraptured gaze. But the power of the spirit can go still further, and these views are not merely confined to the superstitious and the ignorant, as is proved by the following circumstance which took place in France in the year 1637. A woman gave birth to a boy after four years' absence from her husband, and she swore that at the appropriate interval before its birth she had dreamt with great vividness that her husband had embraced her with unusual ardour. The doctors and midwives of Montpellier declared on oath that the occurrence was possible, and the Courts of Havre conferred on the boy all the rights of legitimate birth. I find a further instance in Hamberg's Mysterious Natural Events, page 74 — to the effect that a woman, who in the seventh month of her pregnancy had gone with her husband and her mother to see a lion-tamer, gave birth to a child with a lion's head. Moreover, I have read a story — which may be found in Limböck's *On the Effect of Shock on Pregnant Women* — about a child being born with a large scar on its cheek because the mother had seen the house opposite burn down a few weeks before the event. And other highly remarkable matters are to be found in the same book. As I write this, it lies before me on the table, and I have just been looking through it; these are confirmed and scientifically established occurrences, and what has occurred to me, or rather to my dear wife — who has been faithful to me as sure as I am sitting here now — is equally well established.

Will you forgive me, my dear, if I decide that I must die? You see I cannot help it. It is only from love of you that I am going to die, because I cannot bear these people to despise and mock both you and me. Then

they will indeed stop laughing, then they will understand it all, as I understand it. And you, who are to find me for her and find this letter for her, must know that while I write this she is sleeping in the room near by, quietly sleeping, the sleep that only a good conscience can bring: and her child — our child, now a fortnight old, is lying in the cradle near the bed and is also sleeping. And before I leave the house I shall go in and kiss my wife and my child on the forehead without awakening them. I am writing this all down so carefully that no one may think I am mad.... No, I have considered the matter well, and I am perfectly composed. As soon as I have finished this letter I shall go out in the darkness of the night through the empty streets, farther and farther, to where I so often used to go with my wife in the first years of our marriage — to Dörnbach — and farther still, into the forest. Yes, I have considered it all, and I am in complete possession of my senses.

This is the story. My name is Andreas Thameyer, I am an official in the Austrian Savings Bank, aged 33, living at Hernals, No. 64 Hauptstrasse, married four years ago. I knew my wife for seven years before we were married, and she refused two proposals because she loved me and wished to wait for me: a Kommissär with a salary of 1,800 gulden, and a very handsome young medical student from Trieste who was lodging with her parents — mark this well! She refused them for my sake, although I was neither handsome nor rich, and although our marriage had to be put off from year to year. And now people are saying that this woman has betrayed me — she who waited patiently for me for seven years! Really, they are too stupid and despicable — they cannot see into our inner selves, as I wish I could make mine clear; malicious, coarse brutes! However, now they will all hold their tongues.... Yes, now they will all be saying, "We were in the wrong, we now realise that your wife was true to you, and you had no need to kill yourself." But I say to you, I had! For so long as I was alive you would still have despised us, all of you. Only one person was decent and kind, and that was old Doctor Brauner.... Yes, he told me at once. Before he took me in he said to me: "My dear Thameyer, don't be frightened, and don't excite yourself or your wife. Such things have often happened. I will bring you Limböck's book to-morrow, and others on the effects of shock during pregnancy." These books lie before me now, and I must ask my relatives to be so good as to see that the excellent Doctor Brauner gets his books back with my sincerest thanks. I have no further instructions to leave behind me. My will was made long ago, I have no reason for altering it, as my wife was true to me and the child that she bore me is my child. The fact that its skin is so strange a colour I shall now explain in the simplest manner. Only malevolence and ignorance can reject this explanation, and I venture to maintain that if we lived among people who were not malicious and stupid I should not need to die, for everyone would accept it. But they will not, and they smile and laugh.

Herr Gustav Rengelhofer, my wife's uncle, to whom I have always shown the greatest respect, winked in a manner very offensive to me when we first saw my child; and my own mother — well, she pressed my hand in a very peculiar way, as though I stood in need of sympathy; and my colleagues at the office whispered together when I came in yesterday; and the concierge, to whose children I gave my old worn-out watch at Christmas — a watch-case of that kind has still some use as a toy — the concierge stifled a laugh as I passed him yesterday. Our cook put on a drunken-looking grin, and the grocer at the corner has already stared after me three or four times — just now he stopped in his doorway and said to an old lady: "That's him." And to show how quickly these ridiculous rumours have spread, people whom I do not know have heard of it, I do not know how. When I was driving home yesterday in an omnibus I heard three old women inside talking about me; I heard my Christian name quite clearly. I was standing outside by the conductor.

For this reason I ask in a voice that all may hear (I use the expression advisedly although this is a written statement) — I ask, What am I to do? What else can I do? I cannot say to everybody: "Read Hamberg's *Wonders of Nature,* and Limböck's remarkable work *On the Effect of Shock on Pregnant Women.*" I cannot

go on my knees to them and say: “Don’t be so cruel: you *must* understand.... My wife has always been faithful to me!”

She had a shock when she went to the Zoological Gardens with her sister last August, when those unpleasant black natives had a camp there. I can give my oath she had a shock, for what happened was this. On that day, and for a few days previously, I had been in the country with my parents — my father, in fact, was ill, very ill... so much so that he actually died a few weeks afterwards. However, that is incidental. So Anna was by herself. And when I got back I found her in bed — my absence had been too much for her, perhaps. Anyway, there she was. And I had only been away for three days. My wife loved me as much as that. So I had to sit down on her bed and get her to tell me how she had spent those three days. And without my having questioned her she told me everything and I set it down here with the exactness called for by the circumstances. On Monday she had spent the whole morning at home, but in the afternoon she went with Fritzi — as we call her unmarried sister, her real name is Friederike — she went into town with Fritzi to make some purchases. Fritzi is engaged to an excellent young man who has a position in Germany, in a large mercantile house in Bremen, and Fritzi is soon to join him to be married.... However, this too is by the way, I quite realise that. On Tuesday my wife spent the entire day at home as it was raining. It rained that day in the country, at my parents’ house, as I can well remember. Then came Wednesday. That day Fritzi and my wife went in the evening to the Zoological Gardens where there was a nigger camp. I might mention here that I myself saw these people later on, in September — I went there one Sunday evening with Rudolf Bittner and his wife: Anna absolutely refused to go, she could not forget her terrible experience on that fatal Wednesday. She told me she had never felt such terror as that evening when she was alone near the nigger camp.... Alone, because Fritzi had suddenly got lost.... I cannot conceal this fact. I will, indeed, say nothing against Fritzi as this is my last letter; but it seems not out of place to give Fritzi a warning not to be untrue to her fiancé for he, as an honourable man himself, would be very unhappy about it. Unfortunately, however, it remains a fact that on that evening Herr... though why should I mention his name here?... To cut the matter short, that evening Fritzi lost herself in the company of this gentleman whom I know very well, and whose reputation is none of the best, although he is married; and my poor wife was suddenly alone. It was a misty evening, such as we often have in late summer: for my part I never go out into the Prater in the evening without an overcoat.... I remember there are often grey vapours overhanging the meadows, in which the lights are reflected.... Well, it was just such an evening that Wednesday; Fritzi had disappeared, and my Anna was alone — quite suddenly alone.... It is quite understandable that she was overcome with awful terror at the sight of these gigantic creatures with their glittering eyes and great black beards.... For three whole hours she waited for Fritzi, and kept on hoping that she would come back; but at last the gates were on the point of being shut and she had to go. Thus it happened. Anna told me all this in the early morning, as I sat on her bed, as I have mentioned before.... She had flung her arms round my neck and was trembling; her eyes were all clouded, so that I was quite frightened, and on that day I knew as little as she did, what I came to know later. For had I known that she already carried our child under her heart, I would never, never have allowed her to walk with Fritzi in the Prater on a misty evening, and expose herself to all sorts of risks. Anything may be a risk for a woman in her condition.... Of course, if Fritzi had not lost herself, my wife would never have got into such a state of terror: that was the worst part of it — how she was left, alone and trembling for Fritzi.... Well, it’s all over now, and I would not throw a stone at anyone. But I have written all this down, for I wish the whole affair to be made absolutely clear. If I had not, who knows whether those contemptible people might not have gone on forever saying, “He killed himself because his wife betrayed him.”... No, my friends, once more I say it, my wife is faithful to me and the child she bore is mine. And I love them both until my last moment. It is only you who

are driving me to my death — all those of you who are too contemptible or too malignant to believe or to understand. And the more I appealed to you and tried to make you see the scientific explanation of what has happened — I know you — the more you would jeer and laugh, if not to my face, then behind my back — or you would even say: “Thameyer is mad.”

Well, my worthy friends, I have deprived you of that pleasure: I am dying for my conviction, for the truth, and above all for the honour of my wife; for when I am dead you will not despise my wife, nor laugh at me: you will realise that such things do happen, just as they are recorded by Hamberg, Heliodorous, Malebranche, Weisenburg, Preuss, Limböck, and the rest. And you, my dearest mother, you should not have pressed by hand as if I needed sympathy! Now you will ask my wife’s forgiveness — I know you will.

Now, I think, I have no more to say. It is striking one. Good-night, my dear ones. Now I am going once more into the next room to kiss my wife and child for the last time — and then I shall go. Farewell.

EDEGONDA'S DIARY



YESTERDAY NIGHT, AS I WAS SITTING FOR A WHILE on a bench in the park on my way home, I suddenly saw a man of whose presence I had been quite unaware leaning back in the opposite corner. As there is no lack of empty benches at this late hour, the appearance of this nocturnal neighbour struck me as rather suspicious, and I was just about to make a move when the stranger, who was wearing a long grey overcoat and yellow gloves, raised his hat, addressed me by name, and wished me good evening. And I recognised him with a feeling of agreeable surprise. It was Dr. Gottfried Wehwald, a well-mannered young gentleman, with, indeed, a certain distinction of demeanour, which seemed to be, to him at least, a source of perpetual silent satisfaction. About four years before he had been transferred from the offices of the Vienna municipality to a small country town in lower Austria, but emerged from time to time among his friends at the café, where he was always greeted with that restrained warmth that seemed appropriate to his elegant reserve. So I thought it better, although I had not seen him since Christmas, to display no sort of surprise at the time and place of our meeting; I returned his greeting politely but with an air of indifference, and prepared to start a conversation as between men of the world who must not show the slightest surprise at a casual meeting in Australia, when, with an impatient wave of the hand, he remarked shortly:

"I beg your pardon, my dear fellow, but my time is limited, and I have come here specially to tell you a rather singular story, provided, of course, that you are willing to hear it."

I was rather taken aback by this address; however, I said I was quite ready to listen, but I could not help expressing my surprise that Dr. Wehwald had not come to see me at the café; how he had succeeded in finding me at night here in the park; and why I should be selected for the honour of listening to his story.

"The answer to the first two questions," he replied, with unusual sharpness, "will appear in the course of my narration. My choice fell on you, my dear fellow" (as he continued to address me), "because I knew you were something of an author, and I thought I might rely on my strange but rather unconventional communication being tolerably reproduced and published."

I made some deprecatory remark, whereupon Dr. Wehwald, with a singular twitch of the nostrils, began without further preamble:

"The heroine of my story is called Redegonda. She was the wife of a cavalry captain, Baron T. of the X Dragoons, then quartered in our little town of Z." (He actually used these letters, although not only the name of the small town, but for reasons that will soon appear, both the captain's name and the number of the dragoon regiment could be no secret to me.) "Redegonda," proceeded Dr. Wehwald, "was a woman of extraordinary beauty, and I fell in love with her, as the phrase goes, at first sight. Unfortunately, I had no opportunity of making her personal acquaintance, as the officers scarcely mixed at all with the civil population and extended this exclusiveness, in a manner that was almost offensive, to those who, like myself, were members of the administrative services. So I only saw Redegonda from afar, alone or by her husband's side, and often in the company of other officers and officers' wives, walking through the streets.

Many a time I caught sight of her at a window of her house on the Central Square, or saw her in the evening driving in a jolting carriage to the little theatre, when I had the satisfaction of looking up from the pit to her box, which was much frequented by young officers in the intervals. Sometimes it seemed as though she condescended to notice me. But her glance flashed on me for so brief an instant and then passed that I could draw no conclusions from it. I had already given up the hope of ever being able to lay my homage at her feet

when one marvellous autumn morning she came upon me quite unexpectedly in the small park-like wood that stretches from the eastern gate of the town far into the country. With an imperceptible smile she passed me by — perhaps, in fact, she did not notice me — and had soon disappeared behind the yellowing foliage. I had let her pass without even considering whether I could have greeted her or addressed so much as a word to her; and now that she had disappeared from my ken I did not think of regretting that I had not tried, since I could hardly have expected any success. But then something singular happened. I felt myself suddenly impelled to imagine what would have been the result if I had found the courage to go up and speak to her. And, in my fancy, I saw Redegonda, so far from repulsing me, not trying to conceal her satisfaction at my boldness, and in the course of a lively conversation freely lamenting the emptiness of her existence and the inferiority of her society, and expressing her pleasure at having found in me an understanding and sympathetic soul. And so encouraging was the look she gave me at parting that on the evening of the same day — all this, including the parting glance existing only in my imagination — when I saw her again in her box, I felt just as though a precious secret made an invisible bond between us. You will not be surprised, my dear fellow, that I, who had received so extraordinary a proof of the power of my imagination, was careful we should soon meet again in the same way, and that upon each occasion the intercourse should grow more friendly, more confidential, and more ardent, until one lovely day, under the now leafless branches, the adored one sank into my longing arms. Then I gave rein to my delicious frenzy and it was not long before Redegonda visited me in my small lodging at the far end of the town, and I knew such intoxicating bliss the like of which paltry reality had never brought to me. We did not lack dangers, either, to season our adventure. It happened once in the course of the winter that the captain galloped past us as we were driving, covered with furs, along a country road into the night, and already there arose in my mind a foreboding of what was soon to come upon us with the full weight of destiny. In early spring it was reported in the town that the dragoon regiment, to which Redegonda's husband belonged, was to be transferred to Galicia. My — nay, our — despair was boundless. Nothing that could enter lovers' minds in such extremity, nothing was left unsaid: we would fly together, die together, or sadly acquiesce to the inevitable. However, the last evening came without our having made a definite resolution. I was expecting Redegonda in my flowerdecked room. So as to be prepared for all emergencies my trunk was packed, my revolver loaded, and my farewell letters written. That, my dear fellow, is actual fact. For so entirely had I been mastered by my madness that I not merely thought that, on this, the last evening before the regiment went off, my mistress would be able to come, but I actually expected her. I could not, as of old, summon up her shadow picture, dream the heavenly creature into my arms: no, I felt as though something unaccountable, perhaps frightful, was holding her at home. A hundred times I went to the door, listened down the stairs, looked out of the window, strained my eyes to see Redegonda approaching along the street. Yes, in my impatience, I was on the point of rushing forth to find Redegonda, clasp her to me, and, with the right of the lover and his beloved, claim her from her husband — until at last, stricken as though by fever, I sank down upon my divan. Then suddenly — it was near midnight — the bell rang outside. For the ring at the bell, you must understand, was no longer imagination. It rang a second and third time, and its tinkle, shrill and not to be denied, awoke me to the full consciousness of reality. But at the same moment, as I recognised that until this evening my adventure had been but a strange succession of dreams, I felt a rash hope awake within me — a hope that Redegonda, gripped in her very soul by the power of my longing, had been drawn and driven to my house, and now stood outside upon my threshold, and that in another minute I should hold her very self in my arms. In this delicious expectation I went to the door and opened it. But it was not Redegonda that stood before me, it was Redegonda's husband: he himself, as real and as living as you who sit at the other end of this bench, and he stared into my face.

“There was, of course, nothing for me to do but to let him come into my room, where I invited him to sit down. But he remained standing, and, with an expression of indescribable contempt on his lips, he said:

“‘You are expecting Redegonda. Unfortunately she is prevented from coming. She is, in fact, dead.’ “‘Dead!’ I repeated, and the world stood still. Unmoved, the captain continued: ‘An hour ago I found her sitting at her writing-table, with this small book in front of her, which, to avoid any possibility of misunderstanding, I have brought with me. She probably died of fright when I came so unexpectedly into the room. These lines here are the last she wrote. Look!’ “He handed me a small open book, bound in violet leather, and I read the following words:

“‘Now I am leaving my home forever; my lover waits for me.’

“I merely nodded slowly, as if in confirmation.

“‘You will have guessed,’ continued the captain, ‘that what you have in your hand is Redegonda’s diary. Perhaps you will have the goodness to look through it, so as to make any attempt at denial useless.’ I looked it through — no, I read it. I read it for nearly an hour, while the captain sat motionless on the divan; I read the whole history of our love — that sweet and marvellous tale in all its details: the autumn morning when I first spoke to Redegonda in the wood; our first kiss; our walks; our trips into the country; our hours of bliss in my flower-decked room; our plans for death and flight; our happiness and our despair. All was there, set down in those pages, all that had never happened to me in reality, and yet exactly as it had happened in my imagination. And I did not find that at all so inexplicable as you, my dear fellow, seem clearly to find it at this moment. For it came over me that Redegonda had loved me as I had loved her, and that she had thus acquired the mysterious power of realising in her own imagination the adventures that took place in mine. And since she, being a woman, was nearer than I to the springs of life, where desire and fulfillment are one, she was probably profoundly convinced that she had really felt and done all that was set down in her little violet book. But there was yet another thing that I thought possible: that the whole diary was nothing more nor less than a deliberate revenge upon me, a revenge for my irresolution in not letting my, and her, dreams become a reality; yes, that her sudden death was the work of her own will, and that it had been her intention in this way to get the treacherous diary into her deceived husband’s hands. But I had no time to dwell upon these problems, for the captain there could be only one — the natural — explanation, and I placed myself at his disposal in the words appropriate to such occasions....”

“Without attempting...”

“To deny anything?” interrupted Dr. Wehwald sharply. “Oh, even if such an attempt had had the slightest prospect of success, it would have seemed to me deplorable. For I felt myself entirely responsible for all the consequences of an adventure that I had wanted to experience, though I had been too cowardly to try. ‘I am anxious,’ said the captain, ‘to dispose of our business before Redegonda’s death is known. It is now one in the morning: our witnesses can meet at three, and by five o’clock the affair should be over.’ I again nodded as a sign of understanding. The captain departed with a cold salutation. I put my papers in order, went out of the house, fetched two acquaintances of mine from the office out of their beds — one was a count — told them no more than was necessary to get them to despatch the affair as quickly as possible, and then walked up and down the Central Square, opposite the darkened windows behind which I knew Redegonda’s body was lying, and I had the clear conviction that the fulfillment of my destiny was upon me. At five in the morning, in the little wood, quite near the place where I could have spoken to Redegonda the first time, the captain and I faced each other, pistol in hand.”

“And you killed him?”

“No. My bullet grazed his temple. But he shot me through the heart. I fell dead on the spot, as the phrase

goes."

"What!" I gasped, turning a perplexed glance on my singular neighbour. But there was no one. Dr. Wehwald was no longer sitting in the corner of the bench. Indeed, I have reasons for thinking that he had never sat there. On the other hand I at once remembered that in the café yesterday evening there had been much talk of a duel in which our friend, Dr. Wehwald, had been shot by a cavalry captain of the name of Teuerheim. The circumstance that Frau Redegonda, on the very same day, had vanished into space with a young lieutenant of the regiment, roused the company, out of their serious mood, to a sort of melancholic amusement, and they were all inclined to suspect that Dr. Wehwald, whom we had all known as the paragon of correctness, discretion, and refinement, had — quite in his own style — half willingly and half against his will, paid for another's happiness with his own death.

As regards the appearance of Dr. Wehwald on the park bench, it would certainly have considerably gained in impressiveness and singularity if it had been forthcoming before the chivalrous end of the original. And I will not deny that it did occur to me to heighten the effect of my narrative by this quite trifling alteration. But after brief reflection I shrank before the possibility of the charge that the description of such a mystery provided fresh evidence for spiritualism and other dangerous matters, and I foresaw enquiries as to whether the story was true or fictitious and whether I believed such happenings were possible or not — and I should have had before me the painful alternative of figuring, in accordance with my answer, as an occultist or a fraud. Finally, therefore, I thought it better to set down the history of my nocturnal encounter exactly as it happened, fully realising the danger that many people will, even so, doubt its truth — in that widespread mistrust which authors, though with less reason than most other people, always seem to provoke.

DEAD GABRIEL



SHE DANCED PAST HIM ON THE ARM OF A MAN whom he did not know, nodded her head very slightly, and smiled. Ferdinand bowed more deeply than usual. So she is here, he thought to himself in surprise, and suddenly felt a new sense of freedom. If Irene, only a month after Gabriel's death, can bring herself to wear a ball dress and glide round a brightly lit room with an agreeable stranger, he felt he might cease reproaching himself for appearing at such a place of public gaiety. For the first time this evening, after a month's quiet seclusion, he had been seized by the desire to go out into the world once more. To his parents' pleasant surprise, who had scarcely been able to understand their son's deep depression over the death of a merely casual acquaintance, he had appeared at dinner in his evening clothes, announced his intention of going to the Law Students' Ball, and soon departed with the comfortable sensation of having given the kind old people a small pleasure without much trouble to himself.

In the cab that drove him to the Sophiensäle he still felt a slight sinking at the heart. He thought of the night when he had looked down from Wilhelmine's window and seen a dark form pacing up and down by the park railings, of the morning when, while still lying in bed, he had found the news of Gabriel's suicide in the paper, of the moment when Wilhelmine had shown him the pathetic letter in which Gabriel, without a word of reproach, had taken eternal leave of her. Even while he was going up the broad staircase, and in the ballroom itself, amid the din of the orchestra, he did not feel more cheerful: only Irene's glance had put him into a brighter mood.

He had known Irene now for several years without having taken any special interest in her, and to him, as to all frequenters of the house, her inclination for Gabriel had remained no secret. One evening when Ferdinand, shortly before Christmas, had been at her parents' house, she had sung a few songs in her pleasant husky voice. Gabriel had accompanied her upon the piano, and Ferdinand particularly remembered asking himself why that worthy young man did not marry that charming, simple creature, instead of hanging on to the magnificent Wilhelmine, who would be sure to betray him very soon. That he himself was designed by fate to fulfil this presentiment, Ferdinand, of course, had then not the least suspicion. So far as his share of the guilt of Gabriel's death was concerned, Anastasius Trehenhof, who understood all things earthly and divine, had at once convinced him that his part in the whole situation had not been that of an individual but of a social force, and that the matter was possibly one for mild regret but in no way an occasion for serious remorse. Still, it had been a painful moment for Ferdinand when he stood with Wilhelmine at Gabriel's grave, on which still lay the withered garlands, and his companion suddenly turned to him, as he stood there with the tears streaming down his cheeks, and said, in the tone he had heard so often on the stage, "Yes, you miserable creature, you may well weep now." An hour later, of course, she swore that better men than Gabriel had been willing to die for her sake, and in these last few days it often seemed to Ferdinand as though she had simply forgotten the whole tragic business. Trehenhof was also able to explain this singular circumstance by maintaining that women had more of the elemental in them than men, and from the beginning were created to bear with composure what cannot be changed.

For the second time Irene danced past Ferdinand and again she smiled. But her smile seemed different this time; it was more friendly and more inviting, and her gaze remained fixed on Ferdinand as she glided off again and disappeared with her partner into the crowd. When the waltz had come to an end Ferdinand walked round the room, wondering what had decoyed him to such a place where the dignified melancholy of his

existence, to which the passionate hours spent in Wilhelmine's arms now lent but the impress of a mournful charm, was bound to be disturbed by all the clamorous banalities of a public ball. And he was suddenly seized by a longing, not merely to leave the place, but very soon — possibly to-morrow — to leave Vienna and start on a journey to the south, to Sicily or Egypt. He even reflected whether he should say good-bye to Wilhelmine — when Irene suddenly stood before him. She inclined her head slightly and returned his greeting; he offered her his arm, led her through the throng in the ballroom, up the halfdozen steps to the broad dais, dotted with supper tables, that surrounded the dancing-floor. At that moment the music started again, and as the first chords rang out Irene said softly: "He is dead, and we two are here." Ferdinand felt a little alarmed, unconsciously hastened his step, and at last remarked: "To-day is the first time I have come into such a large company."

"It is the third time for me," Irene replied in a clear voice. "I have been once to a theatre and once to an evening party."

"Was it amusing?" asked Ferdinand.

"I don't know. Someone played the piano, someone else sang some comic songs, and then we danced."

"Yes, it is always the same," remarked Ferdinand.

They were standing by a door. "I am engaged for the quadrille," said Irene, "but I shall not dance. Let us escape to the gallery."

Ferdinand led Irene up the narrow, chilly, spiral staircase. He noticed a few scattered flecks of powder on Irene's shoulders. She wore her dark hair in a heavy knot low down on her neck. Her arm lay lightly upon his. The door to the gallery stood open, and a waiter, who was sitting in the first box, hastily got up.

"I should like a glass of champagne," said Irene.

"Oh!" thought Ferdinand, "perhaps she is going to be more interesting than I imagined. Or is it affectation?"

He ordered the wine and then moved a chair back for her so that she could not be seen from below.

"You were a friend of his?" asked Irene, and looked him straight in the eyes.

"A friend? I can hardly say that. In any case in the last few years our relations were very slight." And he thought to himself: "How strangely she looks at me. I wonder if she guesses that..." But he went on: "Five or six years ago I went to a few lectures with him at the University. As a matter of fact, we were both studying law in a casual sort of way. Then, three years ago, in the autumn, we went on a bicycling tour from Innsbruck, where we had met quite by chance, over the Brenner. We parted again in Verona: I returned to Vienna and he went on to Rome."

Irene nodded several times, as if she had just been listening to somebody that she knew quite well.

"In Rome," Ferdinand continued, "he in fact wrote his first play, or rather his first that was produced."

"Yes," said Irene.

"He did not have much luck," remarked Ferdinand.

The champagne stood on the table, and Ferdinand poured it out. They clinked glasses, and while they were drinking, they looked earnestly into each other's eyes as if the first glass was a toast to the memory of the departed. Then Irene put her glass down and said quietly, "He killed himself over the Bischof woman."

"So people say," Ferdinand replied simply, and with a sense of satisfaction that his expression did not betray him.

The opening bar of the quadrille crashed out so furiously that the champagne glasses trembled.

"Do you know the Bischof personally?" asked Irene.

"Yes," replied Ferdinand. Then she does not suspect, he thought. Of course not. If she did, she would not

be drinking champagne with me up here. Or perhaps she might all the more...?

"I saw the Bischof the other day as Medea," said Irene. "I only went to the theatre on her account. Since the first performance of Gabriel's play last winter I had never seen her on the stage. Did the affair begin then?"

Ferdinand shrugged his shoulders; he had no idea. "She is a great artist," he observed.

"That is quite possible," Irene replied; "but I don't think that gives her the right to..."

"What right?" asked Ferdinand, as he filled the glasses once more.

"The right to drive a man to his death," said Irene, finishing her sentence and staring into vacancy.

"Yes," said Ferdinand thoughtfully, "where the right begins on the one side and the responsibility on the other it is difficult to decide. And if one does not know the more intimate circumstances of the case, how can one... In any case, Fräulein Bischof is one of those beings who — how shall I say? — seems to belong to a more primitive world than ours, and is not to be judged by our measure."

Irene had laid her small old-fashioned ivory fan upon the table; she picked it up and drew it across her cheeks and forehead, as if to cool herself. Then she drank a glass of wine at a gulp, and said: "That she wasn't faithful to him — well, that I can understand. But why wasn't she straightforward with him? Why didn't she say to him: 'It is all over: I love another, let us part'? It would have hurt him very much, but it would not have driven him to his death."

"Who knows?" said Ferdinand slowly.

"Of course it would not," repeated Irene sharply. "It was disgust that drove him to that — simply disgust. He must have thought to himself: 'the very same words she used to me, the very same endearments...'" A shiver went through her body, her gaze wandered across the balustrade down into the hall, and she was silent.

Ferdinand looked at her and could not understand how any man on earth could kill himself for Wilhelmine's sake when this girl was in love with him. At this moment he doubted more deeply than ever whether Gabriel had ever had any talent. It was true that he had only the vaguest recollection of the piece in which Wilhelmine had played the leading part the year before, and after the failure of which, as a sort of compensation, she had become Gabriel's mistress. Then, with averted eyes, Irene said softly: "Did you see nothing of him, then, these last few years?"

"Very little," answered Ferdinand. "It was not until last autumn that we met again a few times. I ran into him once in the Ring. He was with the Bischof, and we all had supper together in the Volksgarten. It was a very pleasant evening. One could still sit in the open air although it was already the end of October. Then we met a few times after that evening, once or twice actually in Fräulein Bischof's flat. Yes, it might have seemed to some extent, as though we had found each other again after a long interval. But nothing came of it." Ferdinand glanced at Irene and smiled.

"Now I will tell you something," said Irene. "I had intended to call on Fräulein Bischof."

"What!" cried Ferdinand, and looked at Irene's forehead, which was very white and higher than girl's foreheads usually are.

The quadrille was at an end, and the music stopped. A confused hum of voices surged up from below. A few indifferent words rang out more clearly as though they had been strong enough to force their way through the din.

"I had really quite made up my mind," said Irene, as she snapped her ivory fan to and fro, "but it was very childish of me, I know — my courage always failed me at the last moment."

"Why did you want to call on her?" asked Ferdinand.

"Why? Surely that is very simple. I wanted to see her face to face, to hear her voice, I wanted to know how

she speaks and moves in daily life, and ask her questions about all manner of ordinary things. Can't you understand that?" she added with sudden vehemence, laughed shortly, drank a mouthful of wine, and went on. "It is interesting to know what these women are really like, these secret creatures, that are to be judged by a different standard, in your opinion, these women for whom good men kill themselves, and who then appear on the stage three days later, tall and magnificent, as if nothing in the world were changed."

Two men sauntered past, stopped, turned, and stared at Irene.

Ferdinand was annoyed, and decided, if this insolence lasted a second longer, to get up and call the two men to account. And he saw himself already exchanging cards, receiving seconds, driving through the Prater in the grey dawn, wounded in the chest, sinking down on to the damp earth, and last of all Wilhelmine standing with some actor at his graveside. But before the second's grace had elapsed they had ceased to stare and walked on. And Ferdinand again heard Irene's voice.

"I should have the courage now," she said, with a strange half-despairing smile.

"Courage for what?" asked Ferdinand.

"Courage to go and see Fräulein Bischof."

"Go and see Fräulein Bischof... now?"

"Yes, now, at once. What do you think of it?" and she swayed her shoulders in time with the music. "Or shall we dance a waltz?"

"After all, it isn't far off," said Ferdinand.

"Isn't it marvellous?" said Irene, with a merry look. "What has changed since we have been sitting in this box and drinking champagne? Nothing. Not the least thing. And suddenly one realises that death is not so dreadful as one had usually imagined. Look: I feel quite prepared to throw myself down from here — or from the top of a tower. I should not mind in the least — really! And how well we have got to know each other! But you must thank Gabriel for that."

"I never imagined..." began Ferdinand, with a polite smile, and he noticed that his heart was throbbing slightly.

The merry look had gone from Irene's eyes: they were large, dark, and serious. "And do you know what was in my mind?" she said, without listening to him. "I wanted to introduce myself as a budding actress or simply as an enthusiastic admirer. 'For a long time I've been longing to... I've been so terribly anxious to...' that's how I should have begun. These women are all very vain, aren't they?"

"That is part of their profession," replied Ferdinand.

"Ah, I should have flattered her so that she would have been simply enchanted, and would certainly have asked me to come again.... And I would have come many times, we should have become very intimate — friends, in fact; until one day — yes — I should have screamed into her face some time or other: 'Do you know what you did? Do you know what you are? A murderess. That's what you are, Fräulein Bischof.'"

Ferdinand looked at her with astonishment, and again wondered what sort of a fool this Gabriel must have been.

A buzz and a clatter rose up from the room, and it all seemed to come from further away than before. Two couples walked by, sat down not far away at a table by the wall, talking and laughing loudly. Then the orchestra crashed out into another dance.

"Supposing I went to see her now?" asked Irene.

"Now?"

"Do you think she would receive me?"

"It would be an odd time to go," said Ferdinand, with a smile.

“Oh, well, it can’t be nearly midnight yet, and she was acting to-day.”

“How do you know?”

“There’s nothing surprising about that, it was in the paper, wasn’t it? She will just have come home. It would be the simplest thing in the world. We will send in our names, and tell any story you like, or just simply the truth. Yes: I was coming straight back from a ball — my longing to get to know her got the better of me — I wanted just to kiss her hand once... and so on. The carriage will wait for us below, and we shall he back before the interval. No one will have noticed.”

“If you really mean to go, Fräulein,” said Ferdinand, “then you must let me go with you.”

Irene looked at him. There was a tense decided look on her face. “Then you don’t think that I really...”

“But have you the courage to jump off a tower, Fräulein?”

Irene stared into his eyes and suddenly got up.

“Come along, then,” she said, and a dark shadow passed over her forehead.

Ferdinand called the waiter, paid, gave Irene his arm, and led her down the two flights of stairs into the ante-room. Then he helped her into a light grey cloak: she turned up the fur collar and tied a lace scarf round her head. Without a word to each other, they went out through the door into the gateway. A carriage came up and they sped noiselessly to their destination over the snow-covered street.

From time to time Ferdinand threw a sidelong glance at Irene. She sat motionless, and from her veiled face her eyes stared out into the darkness. When, after a few minutes, the carriage stopped in front of the house in the Park-Ring Irene waited until Ferdinand had rung the bell and the door had opened. Ferdinand felt as though he had awakened from a dream, as the familiar parlour-maid stood before him and looked with astonishment at him and his companion.

“Please ask the Fräulein,” said Ferdinand, “whether she will be so good as to receive us.”

The girl smiled, said nothing, and showed the pair into the drawing-room. Under the light from the candelabra, Ferdinand saw the semblances of himself and Irene hovering like two strange beings in the Venetian mirror that hung out from the wall over the black, gleaming grand piano. A sudden thought came into his head. How if Irene had got him to introduce her so that she might murder Wilhelmine? The idea vanished as soon as it had come and yet the girl who stood at his side, and slowly unwound the scarf from her head, seemed to him entirely changed — almost like some strange creature whose voice he had never heard before.

A door opened, and Wilhelmine entered wearing a soft velvet indoor dress cut away from the neck. She gave a hand to Ferdinand, and looked at him and his companion with an air of welcome rather than of surprise. Ferdinand tried to give some facetious explanation of this nocturnal visit. He told Wilhelmine that during the dance his companion had talked of nothing but her admiration for Fräulein Bischof, and how he, in a sort of carnival mood, had offered at this unearthly hour to go with her to her idol’s house — at the risk of both being bundled downstairs again.

“What nonsense,” replied Wilhelmine; “on the contrary I am delighted,” and she gave a hand to Irene. “I must only ask you to be kind enough to keep me company at supper — I have just come back from the theatre.”

They all went into the next room where under a greenish crystal shade with little frosted lights a table stood, half of which was laid for supper. While Ferdinand took off his fur coat and threw it on to the divan, Wilhelmine herself took Irene’s cloak from her shoulders and hung it over the back of a chair. Then she took some glasses from a sideboard, filled them with white wine, and set them before Ferdinand and Irene, after which she herself sat down, calmly helped herself to some cold meat, cut it up, said “Excuse me,” and began

to eat. From time to time she threw a friendly, faintly smiling glance at Irene and Ferdinand.

"She naturally takes it as a matter of course," thought Ferdinand, a little disappointed; "and if I had brought the Empress of China and announced my appointment as Mandarin, she would not have thought it strange. It is really rather a pity. 'For women who are never surprised never entirely belong to any man.'" It was a remark of Trehenhof's which suddenly came into his mind.

"Did you have a good time at the ball?" asked Wilhelmine. Ferdinand answered that the room was too full, the people mostly detestable, and the music poor; and so he went on. Wilhelmine glanced at him good-humouredly, and turning to Irene asked whether her companion were a good dancer. Irene nodded and smiled. Her "Yes" was almost inaudible.

"Did you play Feodora to-day, Fräulein?" asked Ferdinand, so as not to let the conversation drop. "Was there a large audience?"

"Packed," Wilhelmine replied.

Irene then said: "I am sorry to say I have never seen you as Feodora, Fräulein Bischof. But I saw you as Medea not so long ago. It was splendid."

"Thank you very much," answered Wilhelmine.

After a few more words of admiration, Irene asked Wilhelmine which were her favourite parts and seemed to listen to her answers with interest. Then they came upon the eternal question — whether the greater actor is the one who loses himself in the part he is presenting or the one who stands above it. Ferdinand mentioned that a young comedian he knew had told him that he had played a certain highly amusing part more effectively than ever on the very day of his father's funeral.

"Nice sort of friends you must have," Wilhelmine observed, putting a section of orange into her mouth.

"What on earth is all this?" thought Ferdinand. "Has Fräulein Irene forgotten that she wanted to call Wilhelmine a murderess to her face?... And is Wilhelmine still aware that I am her lover, though I have called upon her in the middle of the night with a strange woman?..."

"You are so keenly interested in the theatre, Fräulein," remarked Wilhelmine, "I wonder if you have ever thought of taking up acting as a career."

Irene shook her head. "Alas, I have no talent!"

"Well, you may be thankful," said Wilhelmine, "stage life is a sink."

And as she began to talk of all the humiliations that an actress has to endure, Ferdinand noticed that Irene was staring, as though bewitched, at a halfopen door, through the crack of which a bluish glow was visible. And he noticed how Irene's face, which had hitherto been motionless, began to stir slightly under its pallor, and how the silent lips began to quiver strangely. And he thought he could see in her wide-open eyes an evil longing to force her way into that bluish room and bury her face in the pillow on which Gabriel's head had once rested. It then occurred to him that although Irene's absence might until now have been unnoticed, if she stayed away any longer it might be awkward for her and for himself; and he pushed back his chair.

Irene turned towards him as though awakening from a dream. Wilhelmine's last words still echoed in their ears, though they had not heard them.

"It is quite time for us to go," said Irene, and got up.

"I am very sorry that you can't stay longer," answered Wilhelmine.

Irene gazed at her with a calm and searching look.

"Well, my child?" asked Wilhelmine.

"It is strange, Fräulein," said Irene, "how you remind me of a picture we have at home of a Croat or Slovak peasant woman praying before a holy image at the side of a snowy country road."

Wilhelmine nodded thoughtfully, as if she clearly remembered the winter day on which she had knelt in the snow in Croatia before that holy image. Then she insisted on putting Irene's cloak round her shoulders and accompanied her guests into the hall. "Well, go back and have some more jolly dances," she said; "that is, if you really are going back to the ball."

Irene became deathly pale — but smiled.

"You need to be careful of him," added Wilhelmine, and threw a glance at Ferdinand — the first that held anything like a recollection of the night that had gone before.

Ferdinand did not answer: he only felt how Irene covered Wilhelmine and himself with one and the same dark look.

The maid appeared, Wilhelmine once more held out her hands to her guests, said she hoped the girl would come and see her again soon, and smiled at Ferdinand as though she had won a game against him — a game that they had both agreed to play.

Accompanied by the maid carrying a taper, Ferdinand and Irene went down the stairs in silence. The outer door was soon shut behind them. The driver stood by the carriage, Irene got in, and Ferdinand sat down beside her. The horses trotted through the noiseless snow. Suddenly a ray of light from a street lamp fell on Irene's face. Ferdinand saw that she was staring at him with parted lips.

"So it was you," she said softly, and her voice seemed to quiver with amazement, horror, and hate. And again they were in darkness.

"If she had a dagger with her," thought Ferdinand, "I wonder would she stab with it?... And yet, however you look at the thing, I really shouldn't deserve it. Surely I was a social force, not a..." And he fell to meditating whether he should not try to explain the affair to her. Not in the least to justify himself, but because this intelligent creature well deserved to be initiated into the deeper significances of the whole story.

Suddenly he felt arms about him, and Irene's lips on his — savage, hot, and sweet. It was a kiss such as he believed he had never felt before, so fragrant and mysterious, and he wished it might not end. Mouth clung to mouth till the carriage stopped.

Ferdinand got out and gave his hand to Irene.

"You are not to follow me," she said harshly, and disappeared into the hall. Ferdinand stayed outside. It did not for a moment occur to him to disobey her command. He realised quite clearly, and with sudden sorrow, that it was over, and that this kiss could have no sequel.

Three days later he related his adventure to Anastasius Trehenhof, to whom one could tell everything, for discretion in his company would have been as childish as in the presence of the good God.

"It is a pity," said Anastasius, after brief reflection, "that she did not become your mistress. Your child would have interested me. We have enough children of Love, far too many children of Indifference, but of children of Hatred far too few. And yet it is not impossible that from them may come our salvation."

"So you think..." began Ferdinand.

"Come now, don't you flatter yourself," answered Anastasius sharply.

Ferdinand hung his head and was silent.

Besides, he had his sleeping-car ticket to Trieste in his pocket, and from there he went on to Alexandria, Cairo, Assouan.... Three days ago he too had realised that people may die of hopeless love — other people, of course — other people.

THE MURDERER

A CERTAIN YOUNG MAN, A BARRISTER WHO DID NOT practise, without parents, comfortably off, and a popular and pleasant member of society, had for more than a year lived with a girl of humble origin, who, like him, had no relations, and did not need to consider public opinion. At the very beginning of the acquaintance, less from kindness or passion than from the desire to enjoy his happiness as far as possible undisturbed, Alfred had made his mistress give up her position as correspondence-clerk in an important Viennese shop. For a long time, flattered by her grateful tenderness, he had felt happier in the quiet enjoyment of their common freedom than in any previous liaison, but at last he grew gradually aware of that well-known feeling of restless anticipation that with him had always meant the end of such a relationship — an end that, in this case, however, could not at present be foreseen. He already imagined himself as the companion in misfortune of an old friend of his who had been entangled, years before, in a connection of the kind, and now was forced to live a retired and restricted life as a harassed father of a family: and many hours that, without such forebodings, in the company of a sweet, gentle creature like Elise, would have been hours of pure delight, he now began to find wearisome and painful. He was the sort of man who was quite clever enough, and, he flattered himself, considerate enough, not to let Elise notice these feelings of his, but still they had the effect of making him once more frequent that comfortable middle-class society which he had almost deserted in the course of the last year. And when a very popular young lady, whom he met at a dance, the daughter of a wealthy manufacturer, treated him with marked friendliness, and he suddenly saw before him the promising possibility of an engagement suited to his position and his means, he began to look on the other connection, which he had begun as a cheerful inconsequent adventure, as a burdensome fetter which a young man with his advantages should be able to shake off without hesitation. But the smiling serenity with which Elise always welcomed him, her never-varying devotion during the hours, now fewer and fewer, that they spent together, the unclouded confidence with which she let him go from her arms into a world unknown — all this not merely silenced the words of parting on his lips every time he thought he had firmly decided to speak, but filled him with a sort of tormented sympathy, whose hardly realised expression could but seem, to an utterly trusting creature like Elise, a new and sincerer mark of his affection for her. And so it came about that Elise never believed herself more passionately adored by him than when he was fresh from some meeting with Adèle, when, trembling still at the recollection of her sweet, questioning glance, her thrilling touch, and, later, by the fragrance of their first secret lovers' kiss, he came back to a home consecrated to him alone and to his faithless love; and every morning Alfred left his mistress, not with the words of parting that he had composed outside the door, but with fresh protestations of eternal fidelity. And so the days went on, and so did Alfred's two romances. At last the problem for decision really was which evening he had better choose for the inevitable explanation with Elise — the one before or the one after his betrothal with Adèle: and on the first of these two evenings (had he not still a respite?) Alfred came in to his mistress, thanks to the habit of his double life, with an air of almost unruffled composure.

He found her paler than he had ever seen her before, leaning back in the corner of the divan: nor did she get up as usual when he came in, to offer her forehead and mouth for a kiss of welcome. She looked at him with a tired forced smile, so that, not without a feeling of relief, a suspicion came into Alfred's mind that the news of his forthcoming betrothal had, in spite of all attempts at secrecy, in the mysterious way of rumours, found its way to her. But in answer to his hurried questions Elise merely said that, though she had not

mentioned it before, she suffered from time to time with heart-attacks, from which she usually recovered quickly, but this time the after-effects seemed likely to last longer than ever before. Alfred, in the consciousness of his guilty purpose, was very much upset by this disclosure; he was all kindness and sympathy, and before midnight, without an idea how the thing had got so far, he and Elise had planned a trip together, which was to be a lasting cure for these unpleasant seizures.

Never had she been so tender to him, and never had he felt such tenderness for her as when he said good-bye that night; indeed, on his way home he seriously considered writing a letter of farewell to Adele, in which he proposed to excuse his escape from betrothal and the bonds of marriage on the grounds that his vacillating character made him quite unfitted for a life of permanent and peaceful happiness. The artful turns of phrase haunted him even in his sleep but with the light of morning, as it shone through the slits of the jalousies and flickered on his coverlet, he felt that his anxiety had been both foolish and superfluous. Indeed, he scarcely thought it strange that his suffering lady of the night before seemed like a dream, vanished and forgotten, while Adèle stood before his mind, glowing with the fragrance of his infinite desire.

At midday he made his proposal to Adèle's father, who was friendly but not entirely favourable. With a good-humoured and playful reference to the many temptations of a young man like himself, the father, on the contrary, insisted that Alfred should first travel for a year so that he might test the strength and endurance of his feelings at a distance, and he actually forbade the two young people to correspond, so that he might be certain there had been no opportunity for self-deception in this way. If Alfred were of the same mind when he came home, and if he then found that Adèle felt the same as she was sure she did today, then, so far as he was concerned, there would be not the slightest objection to the young couple's immediate marriage. Alfred made a show of reluctance in agreeing to these terms, but, in fact, he took them with an inward sigh of relief as giving him a future respite before the dreadful day; after a moment's thought he explained that in these circumstances he would like to leave at once, and so bring the period of separation all the sooner to an end. Adèle seemed at first hurt by this submissive attitude, but at the end of the short private talk allowed by her father she was full of admiration for her lover's good sense, and sent him, protesting his fidelity and with actual tears in his eyes, into the dangers of a distant separation.

Scarcely had he got into the street when Alfred began to think over in his mind all the possibilities that might, in the course of the year he had before him, lead to a solution of his relations with Elise. And his impulse to dispose of the most serious difficulties of life, without really facing them, was so overmastering that it not merely overcame his vanity, but even drew to the surface of his mind certain darker imaginings which in the ordinary way would have been quite abhorrent to his easy-going nature. Under the pressure of unusually close companionship, such as was inevitable on a journey, Elise's feelings might well, he thought, grow cooler, and she might gradually come to dislike him; and his mistress's heart trouble might also set him free in a manner that would, of course, be more unwelcome. However, he soon thrust both hopes and fears so violently from him that, finally, his only feeling was one of childish, delighted expectation of an agreeable trip abroad in the company of a pleasant and devoted creature; and on the evening of that very day he was talking away in the highest spirits to his guileless companion about the delightful prospects of the journey they were to make.

As the spring was drawing near Alfred and Elise first visited the mild shores of Lake Geneva. Later on they went up to various cooler mountain resorts; they spent the late summer by the seaside in England; in the autumn they visited the Dutch and German cities, and last of all, when the dark days began to come upon them, they fled to the genial southern sun. Until then, Elise, who had never before left the neighbourhood of Vienna, had moved through that year of wonders like a beautiful dreamer led by a beloved guide. Even

Alfred, though he never forgot the future and the crisis he had but postponed, seemed under the same spell as Elise, and gave himself up, unreflecting, to the delights of the moment. And though, at the beginning of their journey, he had carefully tried to keep away from people he knew, and had, so far as possible, avoided showing himself with Elise on populous promenades, or in the dining-rooms of great hotels, later on he challenged fate almost of set purpose, and had he received a telegram from his betrothed accusing him of disloyalty, he would have been perfectly willing to give up a future that still attracted him if he might but rid himself of all doubt, disquiet, and responsibility. But no telegram, nor any news at all, found its way to him from home, for, contrary to Alfred's conceited expectations, Adèle held as strictly as he to the undertaking on which her father had insisted.

However, the hour arrived in which — at least for Alfred — this wonder-year came to a sudden end, and seemed to stand for an instant suspended in time, bereft of its magic, more desolate than any he had known. This happened one day in late autumn in the Botanic Garden in Palermo, when Elise, who until then had been so fresh and lively and blooming, suddenly clutched with both hands at her heart, looked nervously at her lover, and then smiled as if she knew it was a duty not to cause him any inconvenience. But this, instead of touching him, filled him with bitterness, which he did in fact at first try to disguise under an air of concern. He reproached her, though he did not believe what he said, with having constantly concealed such attacks from him; told her he was very hurt that she obviously regarded him as heartless; asked her to promise she would go with him to a doctor at once, and was very glad when she refused, as she said she had no confidence in the local quacks. But when, as though in an access of gratitude and love, there in the open air, on that bench with people passing to and fro, she suddenly seized his hand and put it to her lips, he felt something like a wave of hatred surge through his veins, that actually surprised himself; but he soon found an excuse for it in the many hours of boredom and emptiness which (did he not know it?) had been all too frequent on that journey. So a burning desire for Adèle suddenly flamed up within him, and in defiance of his promise, he sent a telegram to her that very day in which he begged her to send him a word to Genoa, and which he signed "Yours forever."

A few days later he found her reply in Genoa, which read: "Yours for just as long." And, carrying this crumpled sheet against his heart — for in spite of its sceptical mocking tone, it was the epitome of all his hopes — he set out with Elise on his journey to Ceylon, which they had left until the end as they thought it would probably be the most delightful part of their trip. It would have taken a far subtler woman than Elise to guess that, on this journey, it was only Alfred's bold imagination that made her feel such rapture as she had never known in his love, and to realise that it was not she who lay in his arms in those dark and silent nights at sea, but a lady far away, whom his desire was able to conjure into a living presence. But after they had reached that burning island, in the dull monotony of the last part of their stay there, when he found that the image he had all too impetuously evoked now refused to serve him, he began to leave Elise alone, and was malicious enough to use a slight return of the heart trouble, which attacked her soon after she got ashore, as an excuse for his aloofness. She took this, like everything he did, as a sign of the love that had now become all the meaning and happiness of her existence. And when, under the glare of that blue and golden sky, she clung to his side as they drove through the rustling shade of the forests, she did not know that her companion was merely longing for that solitary hour when, undisturbed by Elise, his flying pen would scribble imploring passionate words to another of whose existence Elise did not yet know, and never was to know. In such hours of solitude he was filled with so vast a longing for the absent one that he could forget the features, nay, the very voice, of the woman at his side, this woman that was his, with whom he had wandered over the world for nearly a whole year. And when, the night before they were to start the voyage home, on leaving the writing-room, he found Elise stretched out on her bed, unconscious from another serious attack, he recognised with a

feeling of mild, almost agreeable, horror, that what he had thought was a sensation of slight anxiety was, in fact, the inextinguishable, darkly glimmering hope of his very soul. However, it was in very real and painful agitation that he at once sent for the doctor, who soon appeared and relieved the patient with an injection of morphia. But he gave the supposed husband, who explained that he had serious reasons for not postponing a voyage on which much depended, a note recommending Elise to the special care of the ship's doctor.

In the very first few days the sea-air seemed to have a healing influence on Elise. Her pallor disappeared, her whole being unfolded, her manner was less constrained than Alfred had ever known it. And, while she had hitherto been indifferent, almost hostile, to any, even the most innocent, overtures from strangers, on this occasion she showed no signs of avoiding the casual conversation inevitable on board ship, and accepted with pleasure the respectful homage of a few male fellow passengers. A certain German baron, in particular, who was trying to cure long-standing lung trouble by a sea voyage, spent as much time as he could in Elise's company without becoming a nuisance, and Alfred would have liked to persuade himself that Elise's encouraging demeanour to this, the most agreeable of her admirers, was the welcome sign of a new and growing inclination. But when, with an appearance of anger, he tried to call Elise to account for her rather marked friendliness, she smilingly explained to him that all this forthcoming manner of hers was simply intended to arouse his jealousy, and she was delighted with the success of her little stratagem. This time Alfred could no longer conceal his impatience and disappointment. He replied to her confession, by which she had thought to soothe and please him, with a harshness she could not understand. She stood before him for a moment or two in dumb perplexity, and then suddenly fell unconscious on the deck, where they had been talking, and had to be carried below to her cabin. The ship's doctor, who knew what the trouble was from his colleague's letter, did not think a careful examination necessary, and temporarily relieved that tormented heart by the same means as before. But he was not able to prevent the occurrence of future attacks, without any apparent cause, on the next day and the day after, and although morphia never failed in its effect, he did not conceal his fear that the illness might have a fatal end, and warned Alfred, in appropriate but quite definite terms, to use every possible consideration towards his beautiful wife.

Alfred, in the throes of his dumb resentment against Elise, would have been very ready to take this advice in regard to one particular especially, as to which the doctor had been very emphatic, if Elise had not been overcome by her desire, one dark night of loneliness, and had succeeded in tempting him, in spite of his resistance, back into her arms, as though to make her peace by her endearments. And yet as she lay there in his embrace, exhausted and with half-closed eyes, and he watched the bluish glitter of the waves shimmering through the little port-hole window on to her moist forehead, he felt his lips curl into a smile; it came from the deepest recesses of his soul, and he knew it for a smile of contempt, nay — even of triumph. And while he became shudderingly conscious of this dark hope of his, he had to admit to himself that its fulfillment meant salvation to him and deliverance from all his troubles, especially as Elise, if she knew the end to be inevitable and were given a choice, would certainly wish for no other than to pass away beneath his kisses. And as she now, though fully conscious of the risk, seemed prepared, in ever more passionate self-abandonment, to die for love and in the act of loving, he too felt himself strong enough to accept a sacrifice by which, dreadful as it might seem, the complications of destiny might so work out as to make three human beings happy in the end.

But while, night after night, he watched with expectant dread the dull glitter in her eyes, her ecstatic gasps for breath, and then a minute later her awakening gaze lit up once more, the warm breath rose to her lips eager to meet his, he felt as though he had been cheated; his murderous malignity spent itself in sending a wave of fresh and lovely life pulsing through Elise's veins. And she was so sure of his love that in the

daytime, when he left her alone or to the company of others, to go and cool his fevered forehead in the sea-breeze on the upper deck, she stayed behind without misgiving, and when he came back to her with his wild and wandering smile, she answered it with shining eyes, as though it had been a greeting of affection.

At Naples, where the ship was to call and stay a day, and then go on to Hamburg without any further stop, Alfred hoped to find a letter from Adèle — he had written from Ceylon imploring her to send one there. The stormy weather made it unnecessary for him to find a pretext for leaving Elise and going ashore with some casual acquaintances on one of the boats that lay near by. He drove to the post office, went up to the counter, gave in his name, but had to go away with empty hands. When he tried to console himself with the fact that Adèle's letter had not been sent in time, or had been lost, the feeling of desolation that came over him made him realise that a life without Adèle was for him unthinkable. He was now at the end of his powers of deception, and he first thought of telling Elise the brutal truth the moment he got back to the ship. But then he reflected that the consequences of such a confession could not be foreseen — Elise might drop dead on the spot, or it might drive her to madness or suicide, and the circumstances of such a mishap could not be concealed, and this might damage his relations with Adèle. He ran the same risk if he postponed his confession to the last moment — until they landed in Hamburg, or even until their arrival in Vienna. Full of these despairing thoughts and even now hardly conscious of their implication, Alfred wandered up and down the seashore in the burning noontide sunshine, when he suddenly felt giddy and almost on the point of fainting. He sank nervously on to a bench and waited until the spasm passed and the cloud faded from before his eyes. Then he drew a deep breath as though awakening from sleep. He became suddenly aware that in that instant when his perceptions had threatened to give way a decision had come to fullness in his mind, terrible and clear, that had long been maturing in his deeper consciousness. This awful, burning purpose, whose fulfillment he had tried for many days to bring forth from its cowardly concealment, he must now accomplish, without more delay, by his own will and by his own hands. And as though it had been the fruit of long reflection, a finished plan came forth into his mind.

He got up, and first went to an hotel where he ate his lunch with an excellent appetite. Then he called on three doctors one after the other, pretended to be subject to attacks of agonising pain, and that his stock of morphia to which he had been accustomed for years had run out. He took the prescriptions for which he asked, had them made up by different chemists and when he went on board again at sunset, he was in possession of a dose that he was sure was more than sufficient for his purpose. At dinner on the ship he gave an enthusiastic description of how he had spent the day in an excursion to Pompeii, and with a positive lust for lying, as though to damn himself more deeply, he dwelt on the description of a quarter of an hour that he had spent in the garden of Appius Claudius in contemplation of a statuette which, of course, in reality he had never seen, but happened to have seen mentioned in a guide-book. Elise sat at his side, with the baron opposite her; their eyes met and Alfred could not rid himself of the idea that these were two ghosts glaring at each other from empty eye-sockets.

Later, as they had so often done before, he walked up and down with Elise on the upper deck in the moonlight, while far away the lights glittered on the coast. He felt himself weaken for a moment, but he roused his determination once again by imagining that it was Adèle's arm that pressed against his own; and by the glow of passion that shot through his veins he realised that the most terrible crime was not too high a price to pay for the happiness that awaited him. At the same time he felt a sort of secret envy of the young creature at his side who was so soon to find release, without pain and without foreknowledge, from the perplexities of living.

When they were in their cabin and he took Elise in his arms for the last time he saw her with an utter and

almost unbearably intensified clarity of vision, and yet there was a despairing passion in his embrace; but he felt as though he were accomplishing a destiny in which his will no longer took a part. It needed but one movement of his fingers to upset the glass where it stood, glimmering with bluish iridescence on the little table, and the poison drops could have trickled in harmless moisture on to the indifferent floor. But Alfred lay motionless and waited. He waited until at last, as his heart stood still, Elise, with a movement that he knew so well, reached out her hand with half-closed eyes, as she always did, for a glass to quench her thirst before she slept. He did not stir; he watched her with staring eyes as she raised herself slightly, put the glass to her lips, and swallowed the contents at a gulp. Then she lay down again with a gentle sigh, and laying her head on his breast, as her custom was, prepared to sleep. Alfred heard a long dull hammering in his temples; he heard Elise's quiet breathing; he heard the waves beating as if in lamentation against the bows of the ship, as it glided forward; and time seemed to stand still.

Suddenly he felt a violent shudder pass through Elise's body. Her two hands clutched at his neck, her fingers seemed to be trying to pierce his skin, and then, with a long groan, she opened her eyes. Alfred freed himself from her embrace, sprang out of bed, watched her try to raise herself, fling her arms into the air, stare into the half-light with wild fluttering eyes, and then suddenly collapse full length and lie completely motionless except for short, sharp gasps for breath. Alfred at once realised that she was quite unconscious, and coldly wondered how long it would be before the end. It also occurred to him that at this moment she might still be saved, and with an obscure feeling that he would in this way tempt fate once again — either he would destroy the fruits of what he had accomplished or by a bold stroke find atonement; so he ran to fetch the doctor. If the latter realised what had happened, then the game would be definitely lost; otherwise he was freed forever from guilt and from remorse.

When Alfred came into the cabin, Elise lay back, pale, with glazed and half-closed eyes, her fingers clenched in the coverlet, and beads of sweat glittering on her forehead and her cheeks. The doctor bent down, laid his ear to her breast, listened for a time, nodded gravely, drew back Elise's eyelids, held his own hand to her lips, and listened again; then he turned to Alfred and told him that the death struggle was over. With a wild look that was not dissembled, Alfred hid his head in his hands, sank down by the bedside, and remained for awhile with his forehead pressed against Elise's knee. Then he turned and stared helplessly at the doctor, who held out his hand to him in sympathy. Alfred did not take it, shook his head, and, his mind completely clear and composed, he added as though in self-reproach now that it was too late: "If only we had followed your advice." Then he buried his face gloomily in his hands. "That is what I thought," he heard the doctor say in a tone of gentle reproof, and in an overmastering sensation of triumph he knew his eyes were blazing behind their twitching lids.

The next day, in accordance with the instructions, Elise's body was consigned to the sea, and Alfred, as the widower, felt himself surrounded by universal though silent sympathy. No one liked to disturb him when he walked up and down the deck for hours and stared into a distance that for him — though no one knew it — was hidden by a haze of joy to come. Only the baron occasionally joined Alfred for a few minutes as he paced to and fro, and even so he carefully refrained from uttering a word about the tragedy. Alfred knew very well that the only reason that led the baron to accompany him was his desire to feel the atmosphere of the dear dead woman about him once again. For Alfred these few minutes were the only times in which the past seemed at all to move him. Otherwise he had completely raised himself above his act and what it might mean to other men.

In the living present stood before him the image of the woman he yearned for, whom his guilt had won — and when he looked down into the water from the bow of the ship, it seemed as though he saw it rippling

peacefully over buried worlds to which, in those slumberous depths, it mattered little whether they had foundered yesterday or a thousand years ago.

Only when the German coast came into sight did his pulse begin to beat faster. His purpose was to stay in Hamburg no longer than was necessary to pick up the letter that must be waiting for him, and then to take the next train home. The tedious business of disembarkation set him quivering with impatience; and he sighed with relief when his luggage was at last put on the carriage and he drove through the streets of the city to the post office under a sky dotted with the small pink clouds of a late spring afternoon. He gave his card to the clerk, watched him with greedy eyes as he turned over the letters, held out his hand in readiness, and received the answer that there was nothing for him — no letter, no card, no telegram. He put on an incredulous smile, and asked the official in an almost humble tone, of which he was instantly ashamed, to look again. Then Alfred tried to make out the addresses over the edges of the envelopes, and several times he thought he recognised his name in Adèle's handwriting, more than once he hopefully held out his hand — only to be told again that he was mistaken. At last the official put the packet back into the pigeon-hole, shook his head, and turned away. Alfred wished him good-day with exaggerated courtesy, and the next minute found himself standing bewildered at the door. Only one thing was clear, and that was that he must stay where he was for the present — he could not possibly go on to Vienna without news of some kind from Adèle.

He drove to an hotel, took a room, and scribbled the following words on one of the forms that lay ready on the table: —

"No word from you. Can't understand it. Quite distracted. Back day after to-morrow. When can I see you? Reply at once."

He added his address, and had it sent off reply paid.

When he came down into the entrance-hall, which was already lighted up for the evening, he was aware of someone looking at him — someone who, without getting up, greeted him gravely from where he was sitting with a newspaper on his knee; it was the baron, to whom he had only had time to say a hurried good-bye before he left the boat. Alfred said he was delighted at this unexpected meeting, and really believed he was, and he told the baron that he intended to stay until the next day. The baron, who, in spite of his pallor and persistent cough, said he felt very well, proposed during dinner that they should visit a music-hall together, and when Alfred hesitated he added softly and with lowered eyelids that grief had never yet brought anyone to life again. Alfred laughed, and then was startled by his laughter, thought the baron had noticed his embarrassment, and at once decided that the wisest thing he could do would be to agree. Soon after he found himself sitting with the baron in a box, drinking champagne, and watching, through the smoke and haze, the tricks and antics of acrobats and clowns, accompanied by the vulgar din of a blaring orchestra, listening to halfnaked women singing risqué songs, and with a kind of demented defiance pointing out to his silent companion the graceful legs and bosoms displayed upon the stage. Then he flirted with a flower-seller, threw a yellow rose at the feet of a dancer who shook her black hair at him invitingly, and laughed aloud when he saw the baron's thin lips curl as if in contempt and disgust. Later on it seemed as though hundreds of people from the hall below were looking up at him with malignant curiosity, and as if all the murmurs and whisperings were meant for him alone. He felt a shiver of fear go down his back, and then it occurred to him that he swallowed several glasses of champagne rather too quickly and he recovered his composure. He was delighted to notice that while he had been leaning over the edge of the box two painted ladies had drawn the baron into a conversation; he breathed deeply as though he had escaped a danger, got up, and nodded to his

companion as though to encourage him and wish him luck in his adventure; soon he was walking alone, along streets that he had never seen and never was to see again, whistling some tune or other, and with the feeling that he was wandering through a dream city in the cool night air, back to his hotel.

When he awoke next morning after a deep and heavy sleep, he had at first to remember that he was not on the moving ship, and that the white glimmer yonder was not Elise's morning wrap but a curtain over the window. By a tremendous effort of will, he thrust aside the tide of memory that threatened him and rang the bell. A telegram was brought to him with his breakfast. He left it on the tray so long as the waiter was in the room; and he had the feeling that such self-control deserved some reward. The door had scarcely shut when he opened the telegram with trembling fingers. At first the letters swam before his eyes, then suddenly they stood before him, stiff and huge: —

"To-morrow morning 11 o'clock. Adèle."

He ran about the room, laughing to himself, and refused to be dashed by the curt, cold tone of the summons. That was her way. And even if he did not find everything at home just as he had been hoping — even if there were some unpleasant disclosures waiting for him — what did that matter? He would again stand before her, in the light of her eyes, in the fragrance of her breath; and his dreadful deed would not have been in vain.

He would not stay in the hotel: he spent the short time before the departure of his train in wandering about the city, with wide-open eyes that saw nothing — neither men nor things. At noon he left Hamburg, and stared hour after hour through the windows at the flying landscape: all the thoughts, and hopes, and fears that rose in his mind, he strained his now docile will to force into subjection: and if, so as not to look strange to his fellow passengers, he took up a book or a newspaper, he did not read it, he counted up from one to a hundred — five hundred — a thousand. When night fell, his devouring desire broke down all his efforts to keep calm. He called himself a fool for having misinterpreted the absence of news, and the tone of his last telegram, and realised that his only reproach against Adèle was that she had held to the agreement more honourably than he. But even if it had somehow come to her ears that he had been travelling with a woman, he felt himself strong enough in his love to win his injured lady back to him in spite of all her jealousy and fury. And so completely had he become the master of his waking dreams that in that interminable journey through the night he could hear her voice, see the outlines of her form and features, and even feel her kiss more burning sweet than any that her lips had ever given him.

At last he was at home. His house welcomed him with its friendly comfort. The carefully prepared breakfast looked excellently appetising, and for the first time for many days, so it seemed to him, he thought with perfect calm of one who, freed forever from all earthly care, now slumbered in the silent sea. At one moment he felt as though that succession of hours from the time he landed in Naples until Elise's death might be a figment of his shattered nerves, and that the dreadful ending had been, as the doctors had foreseen, or rather predicted, the result of the normal development of her illness. Yes, the man who, in that sunny foreign city, had hurried so malignantly from doctor to doctor, and from chemist to chemist, and with such dreadful forethought had prepared the deadly poison, the man who had held his beloved in his arms for a last hour of sacrilegious pleasure before he sent her into the beyond, seemed to him a being quite other than himself who sat here drinking tea in this familiar room, and amid these unchanged, homely, comfortable surroundings: he seemed a being greater than himself, to whom he must look up in shuddering admiration. Yet later on, when he was getting out of his bath, and he saw his slim naked body in the mirror and became suddenly conscious that it was he who had done this unbelievable thing, he noticed a hard glitter come into his eyes, and he felt

worthier than ever to clasp his expectant lady to his heart, and (with a curl of contempt upon his lips) more certain than ever of her love.

At the appointed hour he entered the yellow drawing-room, which he had left a year ago almost to the very day, and in the next moment Adèle stood before him, as unconcerned as though she had said good-bye to him the day before: she gave him her hand, and he kissed it and held it long. "Why don't I take her in my arms?" he thought. Then he heard her speak in that husky voice of hers, which had come to him in his dreams that very night; and he was conscious that he himself had not said a word except to whisper her name when she came in. He must not mind, she began, that she had not answered his beautiful letters; but there were certain matters that could be better dealt with face to face than in writing. Her silence must in any case have prepared him for the fact that many things had changed, and the cool tone of her telegram was, as she wished to acknowledge at once, quite intentional. For about six months she had, in fact, been engaged to another. And she mentioned a name that Alfred knew. It was the name of one of his many good friends of old days, of whom he had thought as little in that past year as of most men whom he had met in his previous life. He listened calmly to Adèle, stared spellbound at her smooth forehead, then through her into nothingness, and there was a murmur in his ears as of distant waves surging over sunken worlds. Suddenly he saw something like a gleam of fear in Adèle's eyes; and he realized that he was standing before her, deadly pale, and with a frightful expression in his face, and he found himself saying, "It isn't true, Adèle; you don't mean it; you can't do it."

She was clearly relieved that he had at last found his voice. She smiled her charming smile again, and explained that he must understand she did mean it; that she could do it — she could do, in fact, as she pleased. She had not been engaged to him, they had been completely free when they parted, and without any obligation, she as well as he. And as she loved another now, and not him, the affair was at an end. He must realize that, and resign himself, otherwise she should regret not having followed her father's advice of that morning and simply not been at home to Alfred. And she sat down opposite him, her slender hands clasped on her knees and with a distant look in her shining eyes.

Alfred felt that he needed all his self-command not to do something ridiculous or dreadful. He did not know what he really wanted to do: seize her by the neck and strangle her or fling himself on the floor and cry like a child. But what was the use of thinking about it? He had no choice, he stood there stricken, and had barely the presence of mind to seize Adèle's hands as she was hastening away and hoarsely implore her to stay. Only a quarter of an hour! She must hear him! He had the right to ask that after all that had once passed between them. He had so much to tell her, more than she could imagine, and it was her duty to hear him. For if she knew everything, then she would also know that he was hers and hers only, and she was his alone. She would know that she could not belong to another, that he had won her in guilt and torment; that his lawful claims upon her must utterly sweep aside all others, that she was fettered to him irrevocably, forever and forever, and he to her. And, on his knees before her, clutching her hands in his, his eyes fixed on hers, he poured out his story, and told her all that had happened in the past year; how he had loved another before her; how he had gone abroad with her as she was ill and had no one on earth but himself; how the torment of his desire had nearly worn him out, but the other had clung to him helplessly and he could not go; and how, at the end of his endurance, for love of her — of *her* whose hands he held in his, for a love the like of which had not been seen on earth, he had killed that other, who could not and would not have lived without him — poisoned her, half in pity and half in hatred; how the poor creature now slept under the sea-waves far away, martyr to a happiness that was to be beyond all others, like the price at which it had been won.

Adèle had let him keep her hands and her gaze was still plunged in his. She listened to what he told her,

but he did not really know how she took it — whether as a fairy tale about strange far-off beings or as an item of news about people that were no concern of hers. Perhaps she did not believe what he was telling her. But, in any case, she did not care whether what he said were true or false. He felt his impotence more and more. He watched the words fall from her like a chill unheeded shower; and at the last, when he would have learned his fate from her lips, she merely shook her head. He looked at her fearfully, knowing yet unbelieving, and with a wild questioning look in his twitching eyes.

"No," she said, in a hard voice, "it is over."

And that "No" meant, he knew, that all was forever at an end. Adèle's face was quite inflexible. There was no trace in it of past affection, no sign of horror — only a devastating expression of indifference and boredom.

Alfred bowed his head with a vacant smile as though he understood, let go her hands, which she dropped coldly at her side, turned and went. The door behind him was still open, and he felt a chill breath on his neck. As he went down the stairs he knew that there was nothing left for him to do but to make an end. And it was so decided; he set all his doubts aside, and sauntered quietly homeward through that lovely spring day as though he were going to the sleep he needed after some wild carouse.

But someone was waiting for him in his room. It was the baron. Without taking Alfred's proffered hand he explained that he only wanted a few words with him, and, as Alfred nodded politely, he continued:

"I think it my duty to inform you that I consider you a scoundrel."

"Good!" thought Alfred, "that will be an excellent way out." And he answered calmly: "I am at your disposal. Early to-morrow morning, if that suits you..."

The baron shook his head curtly. It became apparent that he had made his preparations as soon as they had landed. Two young gentlemen from the German Embassy were merely awaiting his further instructions and he said that he expected that his adversary, who was at home here, would find no difficulty in arranging for the affair to be settled before that same evening. Alfred believed he could promise to do so. For one instant he thought of confessing the whole truth to the baron; but from the terrible look of hatred that glittered from those cold eyes, he was afraid that the baron, who perhaps suspected the truth, might hand him over to justice: so he decided to say nothing.

Alfred found the two men he wanted without difficulty. One of them was Adèle's fiancé, the other a young officer with whom he had spent many a gay time in earlier days. At sunset, in a meadow by the Danube, a favourite spot for such encounters, he stood facing the baron. A sense of peace possessed him that, after the turmoil of the last few days, was almost happiness. As he looked down the barrel of the levelled pistol, and heard a distant voice rap out, one by one, those last three seconds, that fell like three chill drops from the silent evening sky, he thought of one unutterably dear to him, over whose mouldering body surged the sea. And when he lay upon the ground, and something dark bent over him, enfolded him, and would not let him go, he felt at last content that his atonement was accepted, and that he was disappearing for her sake, and to her, into that nothingness he had so long desired.

THE DEATH OF A BACHELOR



SOMEONE HAD KNOCKED AT THE DOOR, QUITE gently, but the doctor awoke at once, turned on the light, and sat up in bed. He glanced at his wife who was sleeping quietly, picked up his dressing-gown, and went into the hall. He did not at once recognise the old woman who stood there, with the grey shawl over her head.

"The master is suddenly taken very bad," she said; "would the doctor be kind enough to come at once?" Now he recognised the voice: it was the housekeeper of that old friend of his who had never married. The doctor's first thought was, "My friend is fifty-five years old, his heart has been out of order for years — it might well be something serious," and he said, "I'll come at once — will you wait for me?"

"Excuse me, doctor, but I have to hurry round to two other gentlemen," and she mentioned the names of the merchant and the author.

"But what is your business with them?"

"My master wants to see them again."

"See them again?"

"Yes, sir."

"He is sending for his friends," thought the doctor, "because he feels very near to death,"... and he asked, "Is anyone with your master?"

"Of course," the old woman answered. "Johann is with him all the time." And she departed.

The doctor went back into his bedroom, and while he was dressing quickly and as noiselessly as possible, a feeling of bitterness came over him. It was not so much grief at the possibility of losing a good old friend, but the painful consciousness that they were all so far on in years, though not so long ago they had been young.

The doctor drove in an open carriage through the soft, heavy air of that spring night, to the neighbouring suburb where his friend lived. He looked up at the bedroom window which stood wide open, and whence the pale lamplight glimmered into the night.

The doctor went up the stairs, the servant opened the door, greeted him gravely, and dropped his left arm in a gesture of grief.

"What?" asked the doctor, catching his breath. "Am I too late?"

"Yes, sir," answered the servant, "my master died a quarter of an hour ago."

The doctor heaved a deep sigh and went into the room. There lay his dead friend, with thin, bluish, half-open lips, his arms outstretched over the white coverlet; his meagre beard was in disorder, and a few grey wisps of hair had strayed over his pale damp forehead. The silk-shaded electric lamp that stood on the night table cast a reddish shadow over the pillows. The doctor looked at the dead man. "When was he last in our house?" he thought to himself. "I remember it was snowing that evening. It must have been last winter." They had not seen much of each other latterly.

From without came the sound of horses' hoofs pawing the road. The doctor turned away from the dead man and looked across at the slender branches of the trees swaying in the night air.

The servant came in and the doctor then enquired how it had all happened.

The servant told a familiar story of a sudden attack of vomiting and breathlessness. Then his master had leapt out of bed, paced up and down the room, rushed to his writing-table, tottered back to bed again, where he lay racked with thirst and groaning and after one last effort to raise himself he had sunk back upon the

pillows. The doctor nodded and laid his hand on the dead man's forehead.

A carriage drew up. The doctor went over to the window. He saw the merchant get out and glance enquiringly up at the house. Unconsciously the doctor let his hand fall just as the servant had done who opened the door to him. The merchant threw back his head as if refusing to believe it, and the doctor shrugged his shoulders, left the window, and sat down, in sudden weariness, on a chair at the feet of the dead man. The merchant came in wearing a yellow overcoat unbuttoned, put his hat on a small table near the door, and shook the doctor by the hand. "How dreadful!" he said; "how did it happen?" And he stared dubiously at the dead man.

The doctor told him what he knew, and added: "Even if I had been able to come at once, I could have done nothing."

"Fancy," said the merchant, "it is exactly a week to-day since I last spoke to him at the theatre. I wanted to have supper with him afterwards, but he had one of his secret appointments."

"What, still?" said the doctor, with a gloomy smile.

Outside another carriage stopped. The merchant went to the window. When he saw the author getting out, he drew back, not wanting to announce the sad news by his expression. The doctor had taken a cigarette out of his case and was twisting it about in an embarrassed sort of way. "It's a habit I've had since my hospital days," he remarked apologetically. "When I left a sick-room at night, the first thing I always did was to light a cigarette, whether I had been to give an injection of morphia or to certify a death."

"Do you know," said the merchant, "how long it is since I saw a corpse? Fourteen years — not since my father lay in his coffin."

"But — your wife?"

"I saw my wife in her last moments, but — not afterwards."

The author appeared, shook hands with the other two, and glanced doubtfully at the bed. Then he walked resolutely up to it and looked earnestly at the dead man, yet not without a contemptuous twitch of the lips. "So it was he," he said to himself. For he had played with the question which of his more intimate friends was to be the first to take the last journey.

The housekeeper came in. With tears in her eyes she sank down by the bed, sobbed, and wrung her hands. The author laid his hand gently and soothingly on her shoulder.

The merchant and the doctor stood at the window; and the dank air of the spring night played upon their foreheads.

"It is really very odd," began the merchant, "that he has sent for all of us. Did he want to see us all gathered round his death-bed? Had he something important to say to us?"

"As far as I'm concerned," said the doctor, with a sad smile, "it would not be odd, as I am a doctor. And you," he said, turning to the merchant, "you were at times his business adviser. So perhaps it was a matter of some last instructions that he wanted to give you personally."

"That is possible," said the merchant.

The housekeeper had left the room, and the friends could hear her talking to the other servant in the hall. The author was still standing by the bed carrying on a silent dialogue with the dead man.

"I think," whispered the merchant to the doctor, "that latterly he saw more of our friend. Perhaps he can throw some light on the question."

The author stood motionless, gazing steadily into the closed eyes of the dead man. His hands, which held his broad-brimmed grey hat, were crossed behind his back. The two others began to grow impatient, and the merchant went up to him and cleared his throat.

“Three days ago,” observed the author, “I went for a two-hours’ walk with him among the hills and vineyards. Would you like to know what he talked about? A trip to Sweden, that he had planned for the summer, a new Rembrandt portfolio just published by Watson’s in London, and last of all about Santos Dumont. He went into all sorts of mathematical and scientific details about a dirigible airship, which, to be frank with you, I did not entirely grasp. He certainly was not thinking about death. It must indeed be true that at a certain age people again stop thinking about it.”

The doctor had gone into the adjoining room. Here he might certainly venture to light his cigarette. The sight of white ashes in the bronze tray on the writing-table struck him as strange and almost uncanny. He wondered why he was still there at all, as he sat down on the chair by the writing-table. He had the right to go as soon as he liked, since he had obviously been sent for as a doctor. For their friendship had nearly come to an end. “At my time of life,” he went on, pursuing his reflection, “it is quite impossible for a man like me to keep friends with someone who has no profession and never has had one. What would he have taken up if he had not been rich? He would probably have turned to literature: he was very clever.” And he remembered many malicious but pointed remarks the dead man had made, more especially about the works of their common friend, the author.

The author and the merchant came in. The author assumed an expression of disapproval when he saw the doctor sitting at the deserted writing-table with a cigarette in his hand, which was, however, still unlit, and he closed the door behind him. Here, however, they were to some extent in another world.

“Have you any sort of idea?...” asked the merchant.

“About what?” asked the author absent-mindedly.

“What made him send for us, and just us?”

The author thought it unnecessary to look for any special reason. “Our friend,” he explained, “felt death was upon him, and if he had lived a rather solitary life, at least latterly, at such an hour people who are by nature socially inclined probably feel the need of seeing their friends about them.”

“He had a mistress, though,” remarked the merchant.

“Oh, a mistress,” repeated the author, and contemptuously raised his eyebrows.

At this moment the doctor noticed that the middle drawer of the writing-table was half open.

“I wonder if his will is here?” he said.

“That’s no concern of ours,” observed the merchant, “at least at this moment. And in any case there is a married sister living in London.”

The servant came in. He respectfully asked what arrangements he should make about having the body laid out, the funeral, and the mourning cards. He knew that a will was in the possession of his master’s lawyer, but he was doubtful whether it contained instructions in these matters. The author found the room stuffy and close; he drew aside the heavy red curtains over one of the windows and threw open both casements, and a great waft of the dark blue spring night poured into the room. The doctor asked the servant whether he had any idea why the dead man had sent for him, because, if he remembered rightly, it was years since he had been summoned to that house in his capacity as doctor. The servant, who obviously expected the question, pulled a swollen-looking wallet from his jacket-pocket, took out a sheet of paper, and explained that seven years ago his master had written down the names of the friends whom he wanted sent for when he was dying. So that, even if the dead man had been unconscious at the time, he would have ventured to send for the gentlemen on his own responsibility.

The doctor took the sheet of paper from the servant’s hand and found five names written on it: in addition to those present was the name of a friend who had died two years ago, and another that he did not know. The

servant explained that the latter was a manufacturer whose house the dead man used to visit nine or ten years ago, and whose address had been lost and forgotten. The three looked at each other with uneasy curiosity. “What does that mean?” asked the merchant. “Did he intend to make a speech in his last hours?”

“A funeral oration on himself, no doubt,” added the author.

The doctor had turned his eyes on the open drawer of the writing-table, and suddenly these words, in large Roman letters, stared at him from the cover of an envelope: “To my friends.”

“Hullo!” he cried, took the envelope, held it up, and showed it to the others. “This is for us.” He turned to the servant and, with a movement of the head, indicated that he was not wanted. The servant went.

“For us?” said the author, with wide-open eyes.

“There can be no doubt,” said the doctor, “that we are justified in opening this.”

“It’s our duty,” said the merchant, and buttoned up his overcoat.

The doctor had taken a paper-knife from a glass tray, opened the envelope, laid the letter down, and put on his eyeglasses. The author took advantage of the brief interval to pick up the letter and unfold it. “As it is for all of us,” he remarked casually, and bent over the writing-table so that the light from the shaded lamp should fall on the paper. Near him stood the merchant. The author remained seated.

“You might read it aloud,” said the merchant, and the author began.

“‘To my friends,’” — he stopped with a smile— “yes, it’s written here also,” and he went on reading in a tone of admirable detachment. “‘About a quarter of an hour ago I breathed my last. You are assembled at my death-bed, and you are preparing to read this letter together — if it still exists in the hour of my death, I ought to add. For it might so happen that I should come to a better frame of mind...’”

“What?” asked the doctor.

“‘A better frame of mind,’” repeated the author, and continued: “‘and decide to destroy this letter, for it can do not the slightest good to me, and, at the very least, may cause you some unpleasant hours, even if it does not absolutely poison the life of one or other of you.’”

“Poison our lives?” repeated the doctor, in a wondering tone, as he polished his eyeglasses.

“Quicker,” said the merchant in a husky voice.

The author continued. “‘And I ask myself what kind of evil humour it is that sends me to the writing-table to-day and induces me to write down words whose effect I shall never be able to read upon your faces. And even if I could the pleasure I should get would be too trifling to serve as an excuse for the incredible act I am now about to commit with feelings of the heartiest satisfaction.’”

“Ha!” cried the doctor in a voice he did not recognise as his own. The author threw a glance of irritation at him, and read on, quicker and with less expression than before. “‘Yes, it is an evil humour, and nothing else, for I have really nothing whatever against any of you. I like you all very well in my own way, just as you like me in your way. I never despised you, and if I often laughed at you, I never mocked you. No, not once — and least of all in those hours of which you are so soon to call to mind such vivid and such painful images. Why, then, this evil humour? Perhaps it arose from a deep and not essentially ignoble desire not to leave the world with so many lies upon my soul. I might imagine so, if I had even once had the slightest notion of what men call remorse.’”

“Oh, get on to the end of it,” said the doctor in a new and abrupt tone.

The merchant, without more ado, took the letter from the author, who felt a sort of paralysis creeping over his fingers, glanced down it quickly and read the words: “‘It was fate, my dear friends, and I could not alter it. I have had the wives of all of you: yes, every one.’”

The merchant stopped suddenly and turned back to the first sheet.

“The letter was written nine years ago,” said the merchant.

“Go on,” said the author sharply.

And the merchant proceeded. “‘Of course the circumstances were different in each case. With one of them I lived almost as though we had been married, for many months. The second was more or less what the world is accustomed to call a mad adventure. With the third, the affair went so far that I wanted us to kill ourselves together. The fourth I threw downstairs because she betrayed me with another. And the last was my mistress on one occasion only. Do you all breathe again — my good friends? You should not. It was perhaps the loveliest hour of my life... and hers. Well, my friends, I have nothing more to tell you. Now I am going to fold up this letter, put it away in my writing-desk — and there may it lie until my humour changes and I destroy it, or until it is given into your hands in that hour when I lie upon my death-bed. Farewell.’”

The doctor took the letter from the merchant’s hands and read it with apparent care from the beginning to the end. Then he looked up at the merchant who stood by with folded arms and gazed down at him with something like derision.

“Although your wife died last year,” said the doctor calmly, “it is none the less true.”

The author paced up and down the room, jerked his head convulsively from side to side a few times, and suddenly hissed out through his clenched teeth, “the swine,” and then stared in front of him as though looking for something that had dissolved into air. He was trying to recall the image of the youthful creature that he had once held in his arms as wife. Other women’s faces appeared, often recalled but long since, he had thought, forgotten, but he could not bring before his mind the one he wanted. For his wife’s body was withered and held no attraction for him, and it was so long since she had been his beloved. But she had become something other than that to him, something more and something nobler: a friend and a comrade; full of pride at his successes, full of sympathy with his disappointments, full of insight into his deepest nature. It seemed to him not impossible that the dead man had, in his wickedness, secretly envied him his comrade and tried to take her away. For all those others — what had they really meant to him? He called to mind certain adventures, some of old days and some more recent; there had been enough and to spare of them in his varied literary life, and his wife had smiled or wept over them as they went their course. Where was all this now? As faded as that far-off hour when his wife had flung herself into the arms of a man of no account, without reflection, perhaps without thought: almost as extinct as the recollection of that same hour in the dead skull that lay within on that pitifully crumpled pillow. But perhaps this last will and testament was a bundle of lies — the last revenge of a poor commonplace fellow who knew himself condemned to eternal oblivion, upon a distinguished man over whose works death has been given no power. This was not at all improbable. But even if it were true — it was a petty revenge and unsuccessful in either case.

The doctor stared at the sheet of paper that lay before him, and thought of his gentle, ever kindly wife, now growing old, who lay asleep at home. He thought also of his three children: of his eldest who was now doing his one year’s military service, of his tall daughter, who was engaged to a lawyer, and of the youngest, who was so graceful and charming that a famous artist, who had lately met her at a ball, had asked if he might paint her. He thought of his comfortable home, and all this that surged up at him from the dead man’s letter seemed to him not so much untrue as, in some mysterious way, almost sublimely insignificant. He scarcely felt that at this moment he had experienced anything new. A strange epoch in his existence came into his mind, fourteen or fifteen years before, when he had met with certain troubles over his profession, and, worn out and nearly crazy, had planned to leave the city, his wife and family. At the same time he had entered upon a kind of wild, reckless existence, in which a strange hysterical woman had played a part, who had subsequently committed suicide over another lover. How his life had gradually returned to its original course

he could not now remember in the least. But it must have been in those bad times, which had passed away as they had come, like an illness, that his wife had betrayed him. Yes, it must so have happened, and it was clear to him that he had really always known it. Was she not once on the point of confessing it? Had she not given him hints? Thirteen or fourteen years ago.... When could it have been...? Wasn't it one summer on a holiday trip — late in the evening on the terrace of some hotel? In vain he tried to recall those vanished words.

The merchant stood at the window and stared into the soft pale night. He was determined he would remember his dead wife. But however much he searched his inmost consciousness, at first he could only see himself in the light of a grey morning, standing in black clothes outside a curtained doorway, receiving and returning sympathetic handshakes, with a stale reek of carbolic and flowers in his nostrils. Slowly he succeeded in recalling to his mind the image of his dead wife. And yet at first it was but the image of an image for he could only see the large portrait in a gilt frame that hung over the piano in the drawingroom at home and displayed a haughty-looking lady of thirty in a ball dress. Then at last she herself appeared as a young girl, who, nearly twenty years before, pale and trembling, had accepted his proposal of marriage. Then there arose before him the appearance of a woman in all her splendour, enthroned beside him in a theatre-box, gazing at the stage, but inwardly far away. Then he remembered a passionate creature who welcomed him with unexpected warmth on his return from a long journey. Swiftly again his thoughts turned to a nervous tearful being, with greenish heavy eyes, who had poisoned his days with all manner of evil humours. Next he saw an alarmed, affectionate mother, in a light morning frock, watching by the bedside of a sick child who, none the less, died. Last of all, he saw a pale, outstretched creature in a room reeking of ether, her mouth so pitifully drawn down at the corners, and cold beads of sweat on her forehead, who had shaken his very soul with pity. He knew that all these pictures, and a hundred others, that flashed past his mind's eye with incredible speed, were of one and the same being who had been lowered into the grave two years ago, over whom he had wept, and after whose death he had felt freed from bondage. It seemed to him he must choose one out of all these pictures to reach some definite reaction; for at present he was tossed by shame and anger, groping in the void. He stood there irresolute, and gazed across at the houses in their gardens, shimmering faintly red and yellow in the moonlight and looking like pale painted walls with only air behind them.

"Good-night," said the doctor and got up.

The merchant turned towards him and said: "There's nothing more for me to do here either."

The author had picked up the letter, stuffed it unobtrusively into his coat pocket, and opened the door into the adjoining room. Slowly he walked up to the death-bed, and the others watched him looking down silently at the corpse, his hands behind his back. Then they turned away.

In the hall the merchant said to the servant: "As regards the funeral, it is possible that the will in possession of the lawyers may contain some further instructions."

"And don't forget," pursued the doctor, "to telegraph to your master's sister in London."

"To be sure, sir," replied the servant, as he opened the front door.

The author overtook them on the doorstep. "I can take you both with me," said the doctor, whose carriage was waiting.

"Thank you, no," said the merchant. "I shall walk."

He shook hands with both of them and walked down the road towards the city, glad to feel the soft night air upon his face.

The author got into the carriage with the doctor. The birds were beginning to sing in the garden. The carriage drove past the merchant, and the three men raised their hats, ironically polite, each' with an identical expression on his face. "Shall we soon see another play of yours?" the doctor asked the author in his usual

voice.

The latter launched into an account of the extraordinary difficulties involved in the production of his latest drama which, he had to confess, contained the most sweeping attacks on everything generally held to be sacred. The doctor nodded and did not listen. Nor did the author, for the familiar sentences fell from his lips as though he had learned them by heart.

Both men got out at the doctor's house, and the carriage drove away.

The doctor rang. They both stood and said nothing. As the footsteps of the porter approached, the author said, "Good-night, my dear doctor"; and he added slowly, with a twitch of his nostrils, "I shan't mention this to my wife, you know."

The doctor threw a sidelong glance at him and smiled his charming smile.

The door opened, they shook each other by the hand, the doctor disappeared into the passage, and the door slammed. The author went.

He felt in his breast pocket. Yes, the letter was there. His wife would find it sealed and secure among his papers. And with that strange power of imagination that was peculiarly his own, he could already hear her whispering over his grave, "Oh, how splendid of you... how noble!"

Miscellaneous Stories

Translated by Elsie M. Lang, 1926

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FLOWERS



THE WHOLE AFTERNOON I have been walking about the streets, through the quietly falling soft white snow, — and now I am at home, the lamp burning, cigar alight, and books close at hand: everything ready to make me completely comfortable... but it is all of no use, I can only think of her.

Has she not been dead to me a long time?... Yes, dead, or rather, as I thought with the childlike pathos of the deceived, "worse than dead"?... And now, since that moment, I know she is not "worse than dead," no, simply dead, like all the others who lie out there deep in the earth, always, always; when the spring is here, and when the hot summer comes, and when, like to-day, the snow is falling... without any hope of return — since that moment I have known that not only to me but to everyone else she is dead. Pain? — No. It is only the shudder that always seizes us when those who once belonged to us are laid in the grave, and we see them still, quite distinctly, we see the light in their eyes, and hear the sound of their voices.

It is certainly very sad, as I realised when she deceived me... but what has become of it all?... The fury and the violent hatred, and the loathing for existence, and — ah, yes, certainly — the wounded pride; but gradually I have begun to feel pain. There is one consolation: that she herself suffered. — I have all of them still, at any moment I can read them again, the dozen letters which, sobbing, lamenting, implore forgiveness. — And I see her still, in her dark English clothes and little straw hat, as she stopped at the corner of the street in the evening dusk, and looked back at me standing at the house door.... I still think of that last parting, how she stared at me with the great wondering eyes in the round childish face, that is now so white and changed.... I did not give her my hand when she went; — when for the last time she went. — And from the window I saw her reach the corner of the street and then disappear — forever. Now she can never return....

It was quite by chance I heard of it. Weeks, months might have passed. One morning I met her uncle whom I had not seen for quite a year, and who very seldom stays in Vienna. I had only spoken to him twice before. The first time was three years ago at a social evening, to which she and her mother also came. — And then in the following summer: I was at the "Csarda" in the Prater with a few friends, and at a table near us the uncle sat with two or three other men; he was in a good humour, almost jovial, and drank my health. And before he left the gardens he came and leant over me, and told me as a great secret that his niece had a fancy for me. — And how odd and amusing it seemed to me, half bemused as I was, that the old man should tell me this, to the sound of cymbals and violins, me, who knew her so well, and on whose lips the fragrance of her last kisses still lingered.... And now, this morning. I had almost passed him by. I enquired after his niece, more out of politeness than interest.... I knew nothing of her; it was long since I had received any letter; though she sent me flowers regularly. In remembrance of our happy days; once every month they came; without a word, silent humble flowers.... And when I questioned the old man he was quite astonished. "You did not know the poor child died a week ago?" It was a violent shock. — He told me more. That she had long been ill, but had taken to her bed scarcely a week.... What ailed her? "Melancholia... poorness of blood... the doctor was uncertain."

For a long time I remained standing where he left me, unable to move, as if a great trouble had overtaken me. — And now it seems to me I must realise that something in my life is at an end. — Why? — Why? But it does not touch me. I have no feeling for her, I scarcely think of her. And to write all this down has done me good; I have become quieter... I begin to appreciate the comforts of my home. — To think about her any more

is to torment myself unnecessarily.... No one has less reason to mourn than I.

I have been for a walk. A warm winter day. The sky is so pale, so cold, so high.... And I feel quite peaceful. The meeting with the old man yesterday seems as remote as if it had taken place many weeks ago. — And when I think of her I picture her to myself in a peculiarly clear vivid way; and have only that one feeling, anger which had accompanied all my thoughts of her up to that moment. The actual fact, that she is no longer in this world, but is lying in her coffin and they have buried her, I have not fully grasped.... I have no feeling of sorrow. The world seems to me quite tranquil. All of a sudden I have become conscious that actually there is neither joy nor pain; no, only the grimaces of pleasure and sorrow; we laugh and weep, but our souls are untouched. I can sit down now and read deep serious books and take in their wisdom; I can stand before old pictures which before meant nothing and now yield up to me all their obscure beauty. And when I think of those dear to me who are dead, my heart does not contract as once it did. — Death has become rather friendly; he comes among us and does us no harm.

Snow, deep white snow in all the streets. Little Gretel has come to see me and insists that we must go for a sleigh-ride, and so here we are out in the country, flying along the smooth shining road, with jingling bells, the pale grey sky above us. Swiftly, swiftly we pass along between the white shining hills, and Gretel leans against my shoulder and gazes with delighted eyes at the long highway stretching before us. We come to an inn that we knew well back in the summer. Then it was the centre of a green world, and now it is so changed, so solitary, so isolated that we feel as if we were seeing it for the first time. The hot stove in the inn kitchen glows warmly, and we have to move the table right back, for little Gretel's left cheek and ear have become scarlet. I am obliged to kiss the pale cheek. Then we go back in the twilight. How closely Gretel huddles against me, holding both my hands in hers — And she says "To-day at last you are mine again." All unwitting she has found the very words to make me quite happy. Perhaps, too, the keen snowy air of the country has unfettered my senses, for I feel gayer and lighter than I have for a long time. —

One afternoon I was lying half asleep on the divan when the strange thought crept into my mind that I was cold and hard. Like one who, without tears, yes, without any capacity for feeling, stands beside a grave in which a beloved being has been buried. Like one who has become so hard that he does not want to expiate the waste of a young life. Yes, unexpiated, that is it....

It is all over and done with. Life, pleasure and the little bit of love have chased away all thoughts of that foolish affair. I go again among people. I find them ready for me, they are harmless, they chatter about anything that is amusing. And Gretel is a dear tender creature, and looks lovely when she stands beside me at the window in the afternoon with the sunbeams gilding her fair hair.

Something strange happened to-day.... It is the day on which every month she sent me flowers.... And the flowers have come again just as... as if nothing had changed. They came early in the morning by post, in a long white narrow cardboard box. It was quite early; sleep still pressed upon my eyes and brow, and as I lay thus before attempting to open the box there came to me full recollection.... It almost terrified me.... And there they lay, neatly tied together with a gold thread, carnations and violets.... They lay there as in a coffin. And as I took the flowers in my hand a shudder went through my heart. — I know how it is they came to-day. When her illness was beginning, when perhaps she already felt the approach of death, she gave her usual order at the flower shop. I should not miss her tenderness. — Certainly that is the explanation of their coming, it is perfectly natural, rather pathetic... and yet as I hold the flowers in my hand and they seem to tremble and bow

their heads, against my will and my reason I feel something ghostly about them, as if they came from her, as if they were a greeting from her... as if she wanted, even in death, to tell me of her love, of her truth — too late. Oh, we do not understand death, we never understand it; and no one is really dead until all those who have known him are dead too.... I have held the flowers in my hand to-day as at other times, tenderly, as if I might hurt them if I clasped them too tightly... as if their gentle souls might begin to whimper softly. And they now stand before me on the writing-table in a slim pale-green glass, and it seems to me as if the blossoms bowed their hands in mournful thanks. All the sorrow of an unsatisfied yearning breathes fragrance from them to me, and I believe they have something they could tell me if only we understood the language of living things that do not talk.

I will not let myself be deceived. They are flowers, nothing more. They are not a greeting from the Beyond.... Nor a call, no, not a call from the grave. — They are flowers, and in some flower-shop a girl quite mechanically tied them together, placed them on a little piece of wadding in a, white cardboard box and took them to the post. And now they are here, why should I think about them any more?

I am often out of doors, I take long lonely walks. When I am with other people I feel no real connection with them; all the threads of intercourse have dropped. I am conscious of this even when the dear fair-haired maiden sits in my room and chatters to me about anything... it means nothing to me. The moment after she has gone she is as remote from me as if she were far away, as if the flood of humanity had carried her right away and she had vanished without leaving a trace. If she never came back I should scarcely be surprised.

The flowers stand in the slim green shining glass; their stalks showing through the water, and the room is full of their fragrance... they still scent the room... although they have already been here a week and are slowly beginning to fade.... And I understand all the incredible things at which I have often laughed, I understand our affinity with other living things. I know we may look for an answer when we speak to the clouds and running brooks; and I stare incessantly at these flowers and wait for them to speak to me...oh, no, I know that in truth they are always speaking... even now... that incessantly they speak and complain, and I am beginning to understand them.

How glad I am the dreary winter is coming to an end. There is already a hint of spring in the air. Time passes so strangely. I continue to live as before, and yet it often seems to me as if the outline of my existence were less clearly drawn. Yesterday has already vanished, and anything that happened a few days ago takes on the vagueness of a dream. Each time Gretel leaves me, and especially when I do not see her for several days, my affair with her seems like a story that long long ago was ended. She always comes from so far, so far.... It is true that when she begins to chatter everything soon seems the same as before and I have a vivid impression of her presence and identity; indeed the colours are almost too glaring, the sound too loud; but vivid and glowing as she seems, the dear child has scarcely left me when she is transported to an immeasurable distance. At times there remains with me an afterglow of bright and happy moments, but it soon becomes blurred and is extinguished as suddenly as a fire in a damp grotto. — And I am left alone with my flowers. They are already faded, quite faded. They no longer have fragrance. Gretel hitherto had not noticed them; but to-day her glance lingered on them, and I thought she wanted to question me. Then suddenly a secret shyness seemed to seize her; she did not say anything more but bid me good-bye and went.

Slowly the leaves have dropped. I have not touched them for they would have fallen to dust between my

fingers. That they should fade causes me unspeakable grief. Why I do not have the strength of mind to make an end of the timid ghosts I do not know. They make me ill, these dead flowers. Sometimes I cannot endure them, I rush out away from them, and in the middle of the street they lay hold of me again, and I have to go back, have to look at them, and I find them in the same green glass in which I left them, limp and dreary. Yesterday evening I wept over them as a man weeps over a grave, and did not give a thought to how they really came. — Perhaps I am mistaken, but it seems to me as if Gretel, too, feels the presence of something strange in my room. She laughs no longer when she is with me. She does not speak so loud, nor in the gay vivacious voice to which I am accustomed. In truth I no longer receive her as I did. A continual fear torments me — that she may question me, and I know every question would be intolerable.

She often brings her work, and while I am bending over my books she sits silently at the table, crocheting or embroidering, patiently waiting till I put the books aside and get up, and, coming over to her, take her work out of her hand. Then I remove the green shade from the lamp that stands beside her, and the mild kindly light is diffused throughout the room. I do not like it when there is darkness in the corners.

It is the Spring! — My window stands wide open. Late in the evening Gretel and I look out into the dark street. The air comes to us soft and warm. As I look towards the corner of the street where the lamp burns low I suddenly see a shadow there. I see it and do not see it.... I know that I do not see it.... I shut my eyes but through my shut lids I can see, and there the poor thing stands, by the feeble light of the lamp I see her face with unearthly clearness, as if it were lighted up by a golden sun, and in the white changed face I see the great wondering eyes. Then I go slowly away from the window and sit down at the writing-table, in the light of the candle flickering in the breeze that blows in. And I remain sitting motionless for I know that she is standing at the corner of the street, waiting; and if I dared to touch the dead flowers I might take them out of the glass and give them to her.... That is what I keep on thinking, quite steadily, and at the same time know that it is nonsense. Gretel, too, now leaves the window, stands a moment behind my chair and touches my hair with her lips. Then she goes away and leaves me alone....

I stare at the flowers. They are no longer alive, they are little more than bare stalks, dry and wretched.... They make me sick and furious. — There must be something; else Gretel would have questioned me; she feels it — she runs away sometimes as if there were ghosts in my room.

Ghosts! — They are, they are! — Dead things playing at life. The earth of which these faded flowers smell is simply a memory of the time when they bloomed and breathed fragrance. And the dead return so long as we do not forget them. What matter if they no longer speak; — I can still hear them! They are no longer there but I can see them still! — And the Spring out there, and the sun that shines brightly on my carpet, and the fresh scent of the lilac in the Park close by, and the people who walk there and have no thought of me; are they really the living? I can draw the curtains and there is no more sun. I can put away all thought of the people and they are dead to me. I can shut the window, and the scent of the lilac no longer troubles me, there is no more Spring. I am stronger than the sun and the people and the Spring. But stronger than I are the memories which come when they will and which cannot be shut out. These dry stalks in the glass are stronger than all the fragrance of the lilac and the Spring.

I am sitting before these dry stalks when Gretel enters; she has never before come so early and seldom arrives before dusk. I am surprised, half confused. She remains standing at the door for a few seconds, and I look at her mutely. She smiles and comes nearer. She has a bunch of fresh flowers in her hand. Without saying a word she comes up to my writing-table and lays her flowers in front of me. And the next moment she

has clutched the faded flowers in the green glass. I feel as if she clutched my heart; — but I can say nothing... And as I start up, she pulls me back and smiles at me. And holding high the hand with the dead flowers in it she slips behind the writing-table to the window, and throws them out into the street. I feel as if I must jump after them, but she stands in the way, leaning against the parapet, her face turned towards me. And over her fair head the sun streams, warm, living.... And the sweet scent of the lilac comes from outside. And I look at the empty green glass that stands on the writing-table; I do not know what has happened to me; but I feel free — far more free than ever before. Gretel comes nearer, picks up her little bouquet, and holds it before my face; cool white blossoms... such a fresh wholesome fragrance; — so white, so cool; I want to bury my face in them. — Smiling, white, caressing flowers — and I feel that the spectre has fled. — Gretel stands behind me, and lets her hands stray through my hair. “You dear goose,” she says. — Does she know what she has done?... I take her hands and kiss them. — And in the evening we go out into the fresh air and the Spring. We come back together. I light the candle; we have walked a long way, and Gretel is so tired that she falls asleep in the arm-chair near the open window. She is very lovely as she lies there smiling in her sleep.

Before me stands the lilac blossom in the slim green glass. — Outside in the street — no, no, they are no longer lying there. The wind has already blown them away with the dust.

A FAREWELL

HE HAD ALREADY waited an hour. His heart beat thickly, and now and again he felt half suffocated and drew in great breaths, but without relief. He had gone through it all before; it was always the same; he had to wait, one hour — two — three, and often in vain. And he could not be angry with her, for while her husband was at home she could not venture out, and directly he had gone she would come rushing up, quite desperately, press a swift kiss on his lips, and be off again, flying down the stairs, leaving him again alone. When she was out of sight, he would lie on the divan, quite exhausted by the strain of the terrible hours of waiting, which made him unable to work, and was gradually ruining him. It had been going on now for a quarter of a year, ever since the end of the Spring. Every afternoon from three o'clock he would be in his room with the blinds down, and unable to settle to anything; he had not the patience to read a book, scarcely even a newspaper, nor to write a letter, and did nothing but smoke cigarettes, one after the other until a bluish-grey mist filled the room. The door of the outer room was always left open, and he would be alone in the flat, as his servant was not allowed to be there when she was expected, and when the bell rang suddenly it always startled him. But when she came, when at last it was really she, how splendid that was! He would feel as if a ban had been removed, and he was a free man again; he would sometimes weep for pure joy that at last she was there with him, and he had not to wait for her any longer. Then he would pull her quickly into his room, shut the door, and they would be blissfully happy.

It was agreed that every day he should stay in till seven o'clock; after that she could not come — he had told her quite definitely that he should always go out at seven, because the waiting made him nervous. And yet he always remained in his rooms till later, and would not go down to the street till eight. — Then he would think with a shudder of the passing hours, and sorrowfully recall past summers, when his time was his own, and on fine afternoons he had gone into the country, and in August to the sea, and been healthy and happy; he sighed after freedom, travel, remote places, solitude, but he could not get away from her; for he adored her.

To-day seemed to him as if it would never end. Yesterday she had not come, nor had he received any message from her. — It was already seven, but he could not rest. He did not know what to do. The terrible thing was that he had no means of communicating with her. All he could do was to go to the street in which she lived and walk a few times up and down in front of her windows; he dared not go to her, nor send a messenger, nor make any enquiries. For no one must suspect they even knew each other. They lived in a state of restless, anxious, glowing emotion, and in constant fear of being found out. It seemed to him very beautiful that their love should be so carefully hidden, and yet such days as to-day were full of torment.

It was eight o'clock — she had not come. For the last hour he had stood without moving at the door, looking out through the little spy-window at the stairs. The gas lamps on the staircase were now lighted. He went back into his room, and, dead-tired, threw himself on the divan. It was quite dark in the room and he fell asleep. Half-an-hour later he awoke, and made up his mind to go out. He had a headache, and his legs too ached as if he had been running for hours.

He took his way to her house. It was somehow a sort of consolation to him when he saw the blinds were down in all the windows. Through those in the dining-room and bedroom a ray of light shone. He walked up and down for half-an-hour on the opposite side of the way, with his eyes fixed on the windows. There were not many people in the street. But when some maids and the housekeeper appeared at the door he went away

to avoid being seen. That night he slept profoundly.

The next morning he lay in bed late; he had put a note in the outer room that he was not to be disturbed. At ten o'clock he rang. The servant brought his breakfast; on the tray were letters, but there was not one from her. He said to himself at once that now it was certain she would be with him in the afternoon, and he passed the time till three o'clock tolerably quietly.

On the stroke of three, and not a moment earlier, he came back after lunch to his rooms. He sat down on a chair in the outer room so that he might look out at anyone he heard coming up. He was always glad when he heard footsteps; every time he hoped afresh. But always in vain. Four — five — six — seven — she did not come. He walked up and down his room, groaning softly, then as if he were giddy, threw himself on his bed. He felt absolutely desperate; he could bear it no longer — the best thing to do, was to go away, away — this happiness had been too dearly bought!... Or he must make a stand — only wait one hour — or two — but even then it could not go on, or he would lose everything, the power to work, health, and even in the end, love. He realised that he was not always thinking about her now; his thoughts whirled as in a confused dream. He sprang off the bed. He opened the window and looked out into the twilit street.

... Ah... there... there at the corner... in every woman who passed he seemed to recognise her. He went away again from the window; she would not come now, it was long past her time.

And then it suddenly seemed to him incredibly foolish only to wait those few hours. Perhaps she might now have an opportunity... perhaps she could have come this morning, and already it was on his lips what he would say to her, and be whispered it to himself: "I have been at home the whole day waiting for you; from early morning until night." But even as he said it he laughed at himself, whispering: "I must be mad, mad, mad!" He hurried off again to her house. — Everything was the same as it had been yesterday. Light glimmered through the drawn blinds. Again for half-an-hour he walked up and down on the opposite side of the way — and again went away when the housekeeper and the maids came out of the door. He thought they caught sight of him, and was convinced they were talking about him and saying: "That is the same man who was walking up and down here yesterday." He roamed about the streets nearby, but when ten o'clock sounded from the Tower and the door was shut he returned and stared up at the windows. Only from the end ones, where the bedroom was, a ray of light shone. He looked at it as an exile might. — He stood there helpless, unable to do anything or to enquire. He shuddered at the thought of the hours that lay before him. A night, a morning, a day till three o'clock. — Yes, till three — and then... supposing she did not come then?... An empty carriage passed, he signed to the driver, and was driven slowly up and down the dimly lighted streets.... He thought of the last time they met.... No, no, she had never ceased to love him — no, certainly not! — Had her people begun to suspect?... No, that was not possible... not the slightest hint of it had escaped — and she was so discreet. — There could be only one reason: she was ill and unable to leave her bed. And so she had not even been able to send him word.... And in the morning she would be better and her first thought would be to send him a few lines to comfort him.... Yes, but supposing it was two days or more before she could leave her bed... if she were really very ill.... God in heaven... if she were seriously ill... no, no, no... why should she be seriously ill!...

Suddenly a thought came into his head which brought with it consolation. If she were really ill, might he not send up in the morning and enquire after her? The messenger himself need not know from whom the enquiry came — he might have misunderstood the name.... Yes, yes, that would be all right! — He was quite glad such an opportunity had occurred.

Thus the night passed, and the next day although he received no news, he did not fret, and even spent the afternoon as he had been wont to do before he met her; — for he knew that in the evening of this very day the

uncertainty would be at an end. His longing for her was more tender and kindly than it had been of late.

At eight o'clock in the evening he left his rooms. At the corner of a distant street he engaged a messenger who did not know him, and took him along to her house. Before they arrived he stopped and gave the man careful directions.

He looked at his watch by the light of the street lamp and began to walk up and down. But immediately stopped to wonder what would happen if her husband had a suspicion and questioned the messenger.... He started to run after him but soon moderated his pace and followed slowly behind. He saw him disappear into the house. Albert was standing at a distance and had to strain his eyes not to lose sight of the door.... Three minutes afterwards he saw the man come out again.... He waited a few seconds to see if anyone followed his ambassador but there was no one and he went to meet him. "What happened?" he asked. "The gentleman presents his compliments," answered the man, "and the gracious lady is no better, but they hope she will be up in a few days."

"Whom did you speak to?"

"To the maid; she went into the room but came out again almost at once. I believe the doctor is there...."

"What did she say?"

He made the messenger repeat it a few times, and at last realised that he knew scarcely more than before. She must be seriously ill; evidently there were many enquiries and therefore his messenger would pass unnoticed.... And he would be able to send him again. — He arranged with the man for the next morning at the same hour.

In a few days they hoped she would be up — that was all he knew.... And whether she thought of him, whether she realised what he was suffering — he did not know.

Did she perhaps guess that it was from him this last enquiry had come?... The gentleman presented his compliments; not she, he; of her perhaps, they would not think of saying it.... Yes, but what ailed her? The names of a hundred illnesses flashed through his mind. — Hoped she would be up in a few days, — then it could not be serious.... But don't they always say that, when his own father lay on his deathbed that is what they always said to people.... He perceived that he had begun to run and had come out into a busy street where the many passers-by got in his way. He knew that the time until the evening of the next day would seem to him an eternity.

The hours, however, passed, and he was surprised to find he did not always believe in the serious illness of the loved one. And sometimes he would feel ashamed of taking it so quietly.... But in the afternoon — how long it was since that had happened — he read a book for hours, just as if there were nothing to fear, nor to hope for.

In the evening the messenger was already standing at the corner when Albert came up. This time he told the man that after making the same enquiry as yesterday he was to go on talking to the maid and if possible find out what really was the matter with the gracious lady. It was a long time before he appeared and Albert had begun to grow uneasy. Almost a quarter of an hour had gone by before he saw the man coming out of the house; Albert met him almost opposite.

"The gracious lady is very ill."

"What?" cried Albert.

"The gracious lady is very ill," repeated the man.

"Whom did you ask? What did they say?"

"The maid told me, that it is very serious.... Three doctors have already been there to-day, and the gentleman is quite in despair."

“Go on... go on.... What is the matter with her? Did you not ask? I told you—”

“Certainly. It is typhoid, and the gracious lady has been unconscious for two days.”

Albert stood stock still and looked at the man as if he did not see him.... Then he asked:

“But don’t you know anything more?”

The man began his story all over again, and Albert listened to every word as if it were something fresh. Then he paid him, and went back to stand again in front of the house of his love. Yes, surely he could stand there now undisturbed; — who up there would trouble about him? And he stared up at the bedroom and tried to see through the windows and curtains. The sickroom — yes! — it was quite clear to him now that behind those quiet windows someone was lying seriously ill, — how was it he had not guessed it the first evening? To-day he knew it. A carriage drove up; Albert hastened across and saw a man who must be the doctor alight and disappear through the door. Albert remained standing near, awaiting the return of the doctor, in the vague hope of being able to learn something from his face.... He stood some minutes without moving, and then the earth beneath him seemed to heave up and down, and he perceived that his eyes were shut, and when he opened them he felt he had been dreaming there for hours and now awoke refreshed. That she was seriously ill he could believe, but not dangerously, no.... So young, so beautiful and so beloved.... And suddenly the word “Typhoid” flashed through his mind. He did not know exactly what it was. He remembered seeing it given sometimes as a cause of death in a list of people who had died. He imagined her name being included in such a list, with her age, and “Dead on the 20th of August from Typhoid.”... But that was impossible, absolutely impossible... yet now that he had thought of it, was it really so impossible;... it would be too strange if in a few days he actually read it in print.... He believed by imagining it he had outwitted Fate. — The doctor came out of the house. Albert had almost forgotten him — and he caught his breath. The doctor’s face was calm and grave. He called out an address to the coachman, jumped in and the carriage bore him away. “Why did I not ask him,” thought Albert... then he was glad that he had not. He might have heard something very bad. Now he could continue to hope.... He went slowly away from the house, and resolved not to return sooner than an hour.... And suddenly he pictured her coming to him for the first time after her recovery. He saw it all so clearly that he was quite surprised. He even knew that a fine grey rain was falling. And she was wearing a cloak which in the outer room would fall from her shoulders, and she would rush into his arms and weep, and weep. “There now, you have me again,”... she would whisper at last... “here I am.” Suddenly Albert shivered.... He knew that it would never, never be.... Fate had outwitted him!... Never again would she come to him — five days ago she had been with him for the last time, and he had allowed her to go forever, and he had not known it....

And again he ran along the streets, thoughts humming in his head, he longed to forget. Here he was again in front of her house....The door was still open, and the light was burning above in the dining-room and bedroom. Albert hurried away. He knew if he were to remain there another minute he would rush in to her — to her bedside — to his beloved. — And in his usual way be began to picture what would happen: he saw the husband, who had guessed the truth, hasten up to the sick girl, lying there motionless, and shake her and shout in her ear: “Your lover is here, your lover is here.” — But she was already dead....

In bad dreams he passed the night, in gloomy fatigue the early hours of the day. By eleven o’clock he had sent a messenger to enquire. It would cause no comment, for who would notice now what people came to enquire. All the information he received was: “No change.”... The whole afternoon he remained at home, lying on his divan, unable to understand himself. He felt perfectly indifferent, and only thought: “It is quite delightful to be so tired.”... He fell fast asleep. But when it was dark he suddenly sprang up in an astonished way, as if now for the first time, out of all the confusion, understanding had come to him. And an immense

longing for certainty took possession of him — to-day he would speak to the doctor himself. — He hastened to her house. The housekeeper was standing outside. He went up to her, and, wondering at his own calmness, asked her quite quietly: “How is the lady...?” The housekeeper answered: “Oh, she is very ill; she will never get up again....”

“Ah,” replied Albert, very politely, and added: “But that is sad.”

“Indeed,” agreed the other, “it is very sad — such a young and beautiful lady.” And with that she disappeared through the doorway.

Albert looked after her.... “She certainly did not notice me,” he reflected, and at the same moment the idea struck him, that he might venture into the house, for he was an adept at dissimulation.... The doctor’s carriage now drove up. Albert saluted him as he alighted and received in return a polite bow. He was pleased at this for it established a sort of acquaintance, and he might even question him when he came out....

He stood there without moving, glad to think the physician was with her. He remained thus for a long time.... In any case there must still be some possibility of saving her, otherwise he would not stay so long up there. Or perhaps she already lay at Death’s door.... Or.... Oh, away, away, away! — He wished he could scare all these thoughts away, they were useless — anything was possible. — Suddenly it seemed to him he heard the doctor speak; he even understood the words: “It is the crisis.” And involuntarily he looked up at the window, it was shut. He pondered whether under certain circumstances — e.g. when the senses were excited and therefore quickened, words might not be heard through a closed window. Yes, of course, he had heard them, not in imagination, but actually spoken.... But at this moment the physician came out of the door. Albert made a step towards him. The physician probably took him for a relative of the family, for in answer to the unspoken question in his eyes, he shook his head. But Albert would not understand. He began to speak. “May I ask, Herr Professor, how...” The physician stood with one foot on the carriage step and shook his head again.... “Very ill indeed,” he said, and looked at the young man.... “You are her brother, are you not?”... “Certainly,” said Albert.... The physician looked at him with pity. Then he took his seat in the carriage, nodded to the young man, and drove off.

Albert looked after the carriage wistfully, as if his last hope vanished with it. Then he went away. He talked softly to himself, in broken almost meaningless ejaculations, through his teeth. “Well, what are we doing to-day?... Into the country... is it too late,.. is it too late? It is too late, it is too late.... Yes, I am sad. I am sad. Am I grieved to death? No, I go walking about, I feel nothing at all, nothing at all. I can now go to the theatre, yes, or drive into the country.... Oh, no, I only imagine it... it is all madness, because I have been hit so hard. Yes... hit so hard, shattered. This is a great moment, I must hold fast on to it. Something definite to understand, and to feel... nothing... nothing.” — He shivered a little. “Home, home. I must have had some forewarning... but when, when?... Perhaps once in a dream?... Yes, I am going home now, the same as every evening, as if nothing had happened, as if nothing in the least important had happened. — But what am I persuading myself? I shall not stop at home, I shall run out in the middle of the night, to the house of my love, to the house of my dying love.”... And his teeth chattered.

Suddenly he found himself in his room, and could not remember how he got there. He turned on the light, and sat down on the divan. “I know how it is,” he said to himself: “Pain knocks, and I won’t let it in. But I know it stands outside, I can see it through the spy window. — Ah, how stupid, how stupid. So my love will die....Yes, she will, she will! Or do I perhaps still hope and that is why I am so quiet? No, I know it for certain. Ah, and the doctor took me for her brother! If I had answered him: ‘No, I am her lover’; or, ‘I am her Seladon. I am her shattered Seladon....’

“God in Heaven!” he cried suddenly aloud, and springing up, walked up and down the room.... “I have let

it in! Pain is here!... Anna, Anna, my sweet, my own, my beloved Anna!... And I cannot be with you! Am I not, I, the only one to whom you really belong.... Perhaps she is not unconscious! How do we know! And she longs for me, — and I cannot go to her — dare not go. Or perhaps at the last moment when all earthly ties are loosed, she will say, she will whisper: 'Call him to me — I will see him once more.'... And what would he do?"...

Then he began to picture the whole scene. He saw himself going up the stairs, the husband receives him, leads him to the bedside of the dying girl, she smiles at him with yearning eyes, — he bends over her, she embraces him, and as he raises her, she breathes her last.... And now the husband comes forward, and says to him: "Now go, sir, we shall have something to say to one another very soon."... But life is not like that, no.... That would be the most beautiful, the most perfectly beautiful; to see her once more, to feel that she loved him! — He must see her once more, there must be some way.... Yes, by the Will of Heaven she shall not die until he has seen her once more. It would be too terrible. He had not thought it out properly. Yes, but what was to be done? — It was nearly midnight. "With what excuse could I go there now," he asked himself. "But do I need an excuse... now, that Death.... But even if she... dies — have I the right to betray her secret, to sully her memory for her husband and family?... But... I might be able to feign madness. Ah — I am an adept at playing a part.... Oh, God — what a scene for a play!... But if one played the part so well that one was shut up for the rest of one's life in a lunatic asylum.... Or if she were conscious and herself declared me to be a madman whom she had never known, never seen before!... Oh, my head, my head!" — He threw himself on his bed. Presently he awoke to a consciousness of the night and the stillness which surrounded him. "Now," he said to himself, "I will think it out quietly. I will see her once more.... Yes, in any case... that is settled."

And his thoughts whirled rapidly: he saw himself going up the steps to her flat in a hundred disguises: as the doctor's assistant, a chemist's assistant, a servant, a man from the undertaker's, a beggar, finally he saw himself as a helper to watch by the dead girl, whom he must pretend not to know, to wrap her in her white shroud, and to lay her in her coffin....

He awoke very early. The window had been left open, and although he lay dressed on his bed he felt chilled, a light rain was falling and the wind scattered a few drops in the room.

"The Autumn is here," thought Albert.... Then he sat up and looked at the clock. "I have been fast asleep for five hours. — In that time much... may have happened." — He shivered all over. "Strange, I suddenly know quite well what to do. I will go to the door of the house, knock, and... even... ask...."

He poured himself out a glass of cognac, and drank it off rapidly. Then he went to the window. Ugh! How bleak the street looked. It was still very early.... Men were running, even at seven o'clock they had to be at work. "Yes, to-day I too am a man who at seven o'clock has something to do. 'Very ill indeed,' the doctor said yesterday.

.. But yet no one has died.... And yesterday I felt continually as if she were already.... No, no...." He put on his overcoat, took an umbrella, and went into the outer room. His servant looked up surprised. "I shall soon be back," he said, and went.

He went along very slowly; it was really most painful to him to go there at all. What should he say?

He drew near; he was now in the street, and saw the house in the distance. It seemed different to him. Of course he had never seen it at this hour before. How strange the grey light was which the morning's rain shed over the street. Yes, on such days people died. — If Anna on the day when she was with him for the last time had simply bid him farewell, he might by now perhaps have already forgotten her. Yes, in all probability — for it was extraordinary how long ago it seemed to him that he had seen her for the last time. Could a rainy morning create such a false idea of time.... Ah, God.... Albert was very tired, very overstrained.... He almost

went past the house.

The door was open; a boy came out with milk cans in his hand. Albert went very quietly a few steps through the doorway — suddenly, as he began to mount the stairs a full realisation of all that had happened, and was now happening, and what he wanted to do, flashed upon him. It was just as if he had been half asleep all the time and had now suddenly awakened. He pressed both hands over his heart before he went on. So this was the staircase... he had not seen it before. It was in half darkness; little gas jets were burning on the wall.... Here on the first floor was her home. What was that?... The door stood wide open. — He could see into the outer room — there was no one there. He opened a little door, it led into the kitchen. There was no one there either. He remained standing a little while irresolute. Then the door that led into the living room opened and a servant came softly out without noticing him. Albert went towards her.

"How is the gracious lady?" he asked.

The girl looked at him absently.

"She died half-an-hour ago," she said, and turned away and went into the kitchen.

Albert felt as if the world around him had suddenly become deathly still; as if in that moment everything had ceased, hearts to beat, men to walk, carriages to drive along, clocks to tick. Something within the whole living moving world had stopped, and it had ceased to live and move. "So this is Death," he thought.... "Yesterday I did not understand it...."

"Excuse me," said a voice near him; it came from a man dressed in black, who had come up the stairs and wanted to pass into the outer room, but Albert who stood in the door was in his way. Albert moved a step further in and allowed the man to pass. He paid no further attention to Albert, but went quickly through the door, leaving it half open. Albert could now see into the next room. It was almost dark there for the curtains had been drawn; he saw some people sitting at a table; they rose and greeted the newcomer. He heard them whisper.... Then they all disappeared into an inner room. Albert remained standing at the door and thought: "She is lying in there.... It is not a week since I held her in my arms... and yet I dare not go in." — He heard voices on the stairs. Two women came up and passed him. One, the younger, had her eyes filled with tears. She resembled his love and was certainly the sister of whom she had sometimes spoken to him. An older woman came to meet them, embraced them both, and sobbed softly. "half-an-hour ago," she said, "quite suddenly." Tears prevented her from saying anything more. All three went through the darkened room into the inner one. None of them noticed him.

"I certainly cannot stand here," thought Albert. "I will go away and come back again in an hour." He went down, and the next minute was in the street. The business of the day had now begun, many people hastened past him, and carriages drove by.

"In an hour more people will be up there, and I can mingle with them quite easily. What a consolation certainty is.... I feel better than yesterday; although she is dead.... Half-an-hour ago.... In a thousand years she will not be farther from life than she is now.... And yet the knowledge that an hour ago she still breathed gives me a feeling that somewhere she still must know something of existence; something of which we have no idea as long as we still breathe... perhaps the incomprehensible moment in which we pass from life to death is our poor eternity. Yes, now the waiting in the afternoon is at an end.... I shall stand no more at the spy window — no more, no more."... The hours spent with her now assumed an unspeakable beauty in his mind. A few days ago he had been so happy — yes, happy. It had been a deep oppressive happiness. Ah, when her feet hastened up the last stairs — when she rushed into his arms... and when in the darkened room that was scented with flowers and cigarettes, she lay mute and motionless on the white bed.... Away, away....

"I must go away, it is the only thing I can do. I cannot go on living in my room in the ordinary way. I

should weep all day long, I should always, always be weeping....”

He came to a restaurant. It occurred to him that since yesterday’s luncheon he had had nothing to eat. He went in and had breakfast. — When he came out it was past nine o’clock. “Now I can go there again — I must see her once more. What will happen?... Shall I be able to see her?... I must see her.... Yes, I must see my beloved dead Anna for the last time. — But will they let me go into her room?... Of course more people will be there, and all the doors will stand open....”

He hastened to the house. The housekeeper stood by the door, she greeted him as he went past; on the stairs he passed two men who were also going up. In the outer room some people were standing. The door was wide open; Albert went in. The curtain before one of the windows was drawn back, and some light came into the room. There were about a dozen people present, standing or sitting and talking in hushed voices. The elderly woman whom he had seen before, was sitting quite overcome in the corner of a dark red sofa. As Albert came in she looked at him; he stood before her and held out his hand. — She nodded her head and began again to weep. Albert looked about him; the second door, which led into the inner room was shut. He went over to a man who was standing at the window and absently looking out through the gap in the curtains.... “Where does she lie?” he asked. The man pointed towards the right-hand side. Albert softly opened the door. He was dazzled by the full light which streamed out upon him. He found himself in a small light room with hangings of white and gold and bright blue furniture. No one was there. The door into the next room was ajar. He went in. It was the chamber of death.

The window shutters were closed; a lamp burned. The dead girl lay stretched upon the bed. The covering was drawn up to her mouth; on a small table at her head a candle was burning, the light of which fell full upon her ashen face. He would scarcely have recognized her if he had not known that it was she. But gradually the realisation came to him — that it was Anna, his Anna, who lay there, and for the first time since the beginning of these frightful days he felt tears come into his eyes. A hot burning pain went through his heart, he could have cried aloud before he sank down to kiss her hands.... He now saw for the first time that he was not alone with her. Someone was kneeling at the foot of the bed, his head buried in the cover and holding the hand of the dead girl fast in both of his. When Albert drew near the mourner raised his head. “What shall I say to him?” — But already he felt his right hand seized and pressed by the man who knelt there, and heard his tear-choked voice whisper: “Thank you, thank you.” — And then the mourner turned away and let his head sink down again, sobbing softly into the white cover. Albert stayed for some time looking at the face of the dead girl with a kind of detached interest. Tears were now far from him. His pain had suddenly dried up and become unreal. He knew that this meeting would soon seem to him at once dreadful and comic. It would have seemed to him perfectly ridiculous if he and this other had mingled their tears together.

He turned to go. At the door he stopped to look back. The flickering light cast by the candle made him think there was a smile on Anna’s lips. He nodded to her as if he were bidding her farewell and she could see him. He now wanted to go, but it seemed to him as if with that smile she held him fast; it was a strange contemptuous smile, that seemed to speak to him and he could understand. And the smile said: “I have loved you and now you stand there like a stranger and deny me. Tell him that I was yours, that yours is the right to kneel down and kiss my hands. — Tell him. Why do you not tell him?”

But he dared not, he held his hands before his eyes so that he might no longer, see the smile.... He turned away from the foot of the bed, left the room and shut the door behind him. He went shivering through the bright little boudoir, pushed past the people in the darkened room beyond, the people who whispered together, and among whom he dared not stay; then he hastened through the outer room and down the stairs,

and when he came out of the door, he slunk along by the wall of the house, and his steps grew quicker and quicker until he was out of sight of it. Deeply ashamed, he hastened through the streets; for it seemed to him as if he might not mourn as others did: his dead love had chased him away, because he had denied her.

THE WIFE OF THE WISE MAN



I WILL STAY here a long while. Over this place, which lies between sea and forest, there hovers a gentle melancholy which soothes me. All is still and motionless. Only the white clouds move slowly along; the wind blows high over waves and tree-tops, and the sea and forest never murmur. Here is deep solitude, one is conscious of it even in a crowd at the hotel, or on the promenade. The band plays the saddest of Swedish and Danish songs, and even their gayest airs sound tired and faint. When the musicians have ended they come silently down the steps of the stand and disappear slowly and sadly with their instruments down the avenue.

I am writing this on my knee, as I am rowed in a boat along the shore.

The shore is green and gentle, covered with the beautiful gardens of country houses, with seats here and there looking out over the water; behind the houses is a narrow white street, and beyond the street the forest, which spreads over the land, gently ascending in the distance, and where it ends there is sunlight. The evening glow turns the long narrow island lying opposite into gold. The boatman says we could reach it in a couple of hours. Some day I must go. But there is something in this place that holds me strangely fast; I never stray beyond its narrow limits. I am happiest on the shore or on my terrace.

I lie under the beech-trees. The heavy afternoon weighs upon the leaves. I hear the footsteps of people passing along the path to the woods; but I cannot see them, for I do not move, and my eyes are gazing up into the blue vault above. I can hear the clear laughter of children, but the great stillness around swiftly absorbs every sound, and although it may have echoed a moment ago it already seems long past. When I shut my eyes and open them again I feel as if I had awakened after a long night. Thus I, too, become absorbed, a part of Nature, in the great stillness around.

The beautiful stillness is at an end. Not in the little boat nor under the beeches can I recapture it. The change came all at once. The melodies of the band now sound warm and festive; the people who pass by talk gaily; the children laugh and cry. Even the gentle sea that seems so peaceful, at night beats against the shore. Life for me has again become full of sound. I had never before come away from home with a lighter heart; I left nothing incomplete behind me. I had obtained my Doctor's degree; an artistic illusion which had misled me in my youth I had finally buried, and Fraulein Jenny had become the bride of a watchmaker. So I had the rare luck to set out upon my travels without leaving a beloved being behind, and without an illusion to distract me. I felt free and happy with the closing of one of the pages of my life. And now my troubles have begun all over again — for Frau Friederike is here.

It is late evening, I am on my terrace; I have placed a light on my table and now write. It is the time, above all others, when one sees clearly. I will write down our conversation, the first I have had with her for seven years, the first since that hour....

It was on the shore, about luncheon time. I was sitting on a bench. Now and again someone would go past. A woman with a little boy was standing on the landing-stage, too far off for me to see their faces clearly. Besides they did not seem to me in any way remarkable. I only knew that she had stood there for a long while when at last she left the landing-stage and gradually drew nearer to me. She led the boy by the hand. I could see now that she was young and slim. I seemed to know her face. She was still ten steps away from me; when I got up quickly and went to meet her. She had smiled, and I knew who she was.

"Yes, it is I," she said and held out her hand.

"I recognised you at once," I said.

“I hope it was not too difficult,” she answered. “You yourself have really not changed at all.”

“Seven years,”... I said.

She nodded. “Seven years.”...

We were both silent. She was very lovely. A smile played on her lips, she turned towards the little boy whom she still held by the hand, and said: “Give the gentleman your hand.” The little boy held out his hand but did not look at me.

“This is my son,” she said.

He was a beautiful dark boy with bright eyes.

“It’s very delightful to meet you again,” she began, “I had not thought....”

“It is very strange,” I said.

“Why?” she asked, smiling at me and for the first time looking straight into my eyes. “It is summer... everyone goes away, do they not?”

An enquiry after her husband rose to my lips but I did not venture to utter it.

“How long will you stay here?” I asked.

“A fortnight. Then I shall go back with my husband to Copenhagen.”

I cast a quick glance at her which she answered calmly: “Do you perhaps wonder at that?”

I felt uncertain, almost uneasy. How incomprehensible it suddenly appeared to me that anyone could so entirely forget. For I now realised for the first time that I had thought of her so little during the seven years that it was as if she had never existed.

“But you must have a great deal to tell me,” she began again, “a very great deal. Of course you have been doctor for a long time?”

“Not very long — a month.”

“But you still have your child’s face,” she said. “Your moustache looks as if it were stuck on.” The bell for supper sounded, too loudly, from the hotel.

“Adieu,” she said at once, as if she had been waiting for it.

“Can we not go together?” I asked.

“I have my meals with the boy in my room. I do not care to be among so many people.”

“When shall we meet again?”

She looked in the direction of the little promenade along the shore with a smile. “People must meet each other there,” she said, and as she perceived I was agreeably affected, added: “especially if one has the inclination. Good-bye.”

She held out her hand to me and went away without a glance behind. The little boy turned once and looked back at me.

I walked up and down the promenade the whole afternoon and evening, and she did not come. Had she finally decided to go away at once? I really could not be surprised.

A day has gone by and I have not seen her. It rained all the morning, and there was scarcely anyone on the promenade except myself. I went past the house in which she was staying two or three times, but I did not know which her windows were.

In the afternoon it left off raining, and I took a long walk by the sea to the next village. The weather was dull and oppressive.

On the way I could think of nothing but that time. I remembered everything quite distinctly. The cheerful house in which I lived and the little garden with the green-painted seats and tables. And the little town with its quiet white streets. And the distant hills veiled in mist. And over all the pale blue sky, which seemed so much

a part of the place, that in the whole world only there it was so pale a blue. And I recalled all the people I had known there; my school-fellows, and my tutor, who was Friederike's husband. I saw him otherwise than he appeared to me at that last moment — I saw him with the mild somewhat tired expression which his face wore when he called out friendly greetings to us boys after school in the street; and when he sat at table between Friederike and me, mostly silent. I saw him as from my window I had often looked out and seen him: correcting our work at the green-painted table in the garden. And I remembered how Friederike used to come into the garden to bring him his afternoon coffee, and would look up at my window smiling, with a glance which I did not understand till that last hour — I know now that I have often thought of it. But not as something actual, rather as a picture that hangs quietly and peacefully on the wall of a room.

We sat side by side on the shore to-day, and talked to each other like strangers. The boy played at our feet with sand and stones. We did not talk as if anything were weighing upon us, but like people who mean nothing to one another, and have only been brought together for a short time by the chances of seaside life; we chatted about the weather, the country and other people, also about music and a few new books. When I was sitting near her I felt it not disagreeable but when she got up and went away it seemed intolerable. I could have called after her, "Leave me something," but she might not have understood. And if I thought about it, what else could I expect? That she should be so friendly to me at our first meeting was evidently only the result of surprise; perhaps also the pleasant feeling of finding an old acquaintance in a strange place. But now she had time to remember everything like myself; and what she had hoped was forever forgotten, had again come to life. I could not in the least judge what she must have suffered because of me, and what perhaps even now she was enduring. That she was living with him I could plainly see, and that she had reconciled herself to him again, the four-year-old boy was a living proof — but people can be reconciled without forgiving, and forgive without forgetting. — I shall go away, it would be better for both of us.

That whole year rises up before me with a strange melancholy beauty, and I live through it all again. Every little incident comes back to me. I remember the Autumn morning on which I came to the little town, accompanied by my father, to take the last year of my school course. I clearly see the school buildings in the middle of the park with its tall trees; I remember my quiet work in the beautiful spacious room, and the friendly talk about my future that I had at table with the Professor, and to which Friederike smilingly listened, and the walks with the students along the country roads to the nearest town; and all the little insignificant things suddenly assumed as much importance to me as if they typified my youth. Probably it would all have remained in the shadows of oblivion if it had not been that from that last hour a mysterious glamour was reflected upon it. And the most remarkable thing is that since Friederike has been here those days seem to me much nearer than the May of this year, when I loved the Fraulein who married the watchmaker in June.

When early this morning I went to my window and looked out upon the great terrace, I saw Friederike sitting with her boy at one of the tables; they were the first to breakfast. Her table was directly under my window, and I called out "Goodmorning" to her. She looked up. "Awake already?" she said. "Won't you come down?"

The next minute I was sitting at their table. It was a wonderful morning, cool and sunny. We chatted again about the same sort of things as last time, and yet it was quite different. Behind our words remembrance now glowed. We went into the forest. And she began to talk about herself and her house.

"At our house everything is still exactly as it was, only the garden is more beautiful; my husband spends a great deal of time in it now that we have the boy. Next year we shall have a greenhouse."

She went on chatting. "We have had a theatre now for two years and have plays all the winter up to Palm Sunday. I go two or three times a week, generally with my mother, who takes great delight in it."

“I go to the theatre too,” cried the little boy.

“Yes, you too. On Sunday afternoons,” she explained, turning towards me, “they often play pieces for children, and I go with the boy. I find it very amusing.”

I had to tell her many things about myself. She did not ask about my profession or any serious matters, but preferred to know how I spent my leisure, and was interested in hearing about the social amusements of the great town. The conversation flowed pleasantly on without a break; not a single word touched upon our mutual recollection, and yet it must certainly have been as present to her as it was to me. We walked about for hours, and I felt almost happy. Several times the little one walked between us, and our hands met over his hair. But we both went on talking in unembarrassed fashion, as if we had not noticed.

When I was again alone, my pleasant feelings vanished. I felt I knew nothing of Friederike. I could not understand how it was uncertainty never tormented me during our conversations, and it occurred to me as strange that Friederike herself had not felt impelled to mention it. For even if I assume that hour has not been spoken of between her and her husband for years — yet she herself cannot have forgotten it. Something serious must have followed upon my mute farewell — how can she possibly refrain from speaking of it? Does she expect me to begin? What prevents me? The same shyness perhaps, which keeps her from questioning me. Are we both afraid to bring it up? — That is quite possible. And yet it must come out some time; until it does there will be something between us that separates us. And that something should separate us hurts me more than anything else.

In the afternoon I sauntered through the forest, the same way I had gone in the morning with her. I felt within me a yearning as after an infinite love. Late in the evening, when I had looked for her everywhere in vain, I went past her house. She stood at one of the windows. I called up to her, as earlier in the day she had called up to me: “Are you not coming down?”

She said coldly, as it seemed to me: “I am tired. Good-night” — and shut the window. In my memories of her Friederike seems to me two different people. Generally I see her sitting in the garden in a white morning frock, a pale gentle woman who is like a mother to me and strokes my cheek. If this were the only one I had to meet again here, my peace certainly would not have been disturbed, and I should lie under the shade of the trees as in the first days of my stay here.

But she had once appeared to me an entirely different person: it was in the last hour that I had spent in the little town.

It was the day on which I had received my matriculation certificate. I had lunched with the Professor and his wife as usual, and as I had no wish to be accompanied to the railway station I had taken leave of them when we rose from the table. I felt quite untroubled. But when I sat on the bed in my bare room, with my boxes packed beside me, and through the wide open window looked out upon the green leaves of the little garden, and the white clouds which hung motionless over the hills, the mournfulness of the parting came gently and almost pleasingly over me. Suddenly the door opened. Friederike entered. I got up quickly. She came nearer and leant against the table, supporting herself against the corner of it with both hands behind her, and looked earnestly at me. Then she said softly: “So, to-day?” I only nodded, and for the first time felt deeply how sad it really was that I had to go away from here. She looked for a while at the ground and was silent. Then she raised her head and came nearer to me. She laid both hands lightly on my hair, as she had often done before, but I knew at once that it meant something quite different this time. Then she let her hands move slowly down my cheeks, and her glance rested on me with infinite kindliness. She shook her head with a troubled expression, as if there were something she could not do. “Must you go away to-day?” she asked softly. “Yes,” I said. “Forever?” she cried. “No,” I answered. “Oh, yes,” she said, with a painful twitching of

the lips, “it is forever. Even if you should visit us again... in two or three years — to-day you go away from us forever.” — She spoke with a tenderness that no longer had anything motherly in it. It went through me. And suddenly she kissed me. At first I only thought: she has never done that before. But when her lips still clung to mine, I understood what that kiss meant. I was confused and happy; I could have wept. She threw her arms round my neck; I sank, as if she pressed me, down upon the divan. Friederike lay upon my knees, and drew my mouth down to hers. Then she took both my hands and buried her face in them. I whispered her name, and was surprised to find how beautiful it was. The scent of her hair rose up to me; I inhaled it with ecstasy.... At this moment the door opened softly — it had only been pulled together — I turned stiff with terror — Friederike’s husband stood there. I would have cried out but no sound come. I stared in his face — I could not see if anything in his expression changed — for at the same moment he vanished, shutting the door. I wanted to raise myself, to free my hands in which Friederike’s face was still hidden, to speak, painfully to utter her name — but she herself sprang up instantly — dead white — whispered imperiously to me: “Be silent,” stood for a second motionless, her face turned towards the door as if she were listening. Then she half opened it and looked through. I stood breathless. She opened it wide, took me by the hand, and whispering: “Go, go quickly,” pushed me out. I slunk across the little landing to the stairs, and then turned round and saw her standing at the door with unspeakable anguish imprinted on her face. With a violent motion of the hand she signed to me: “Go, go.” — and I rushed away.

And what happened next I think of as a mad dream. I hastened to the railway station, tormented by deadly anxiety. I travelled through the night, tossing about sleepless in a coupé. I arrived home, expecting that my parents had already been informed of all that had happened, and was quite astonished when they received me with joy and kindliness. All day long I spent in imminent expectation of something terrible happening, and every ring of the bell, every post made me tremble. At last a card arrived which quieted me; it was from a school friend, who lived in the little town and who sent me harmless news and cheerful greetings. So nothing terrible had happened; at least it had not come to an open scandal. I dared hope that it had been played out quietly between husband and wife, that he had forgiven her and she had repented.

In spite of this, that first adventure remained in my memory at first as something regrettable, almost tragic, and I seemed to myself as one who, although guiltless, had destroyed the peace of a household. Gradually this feeling disappeared, but later on when I had learned to understand that hour better and more clearly from fresh experiences, sometimes a strange tenderness towards Friederike came over me, with an ache in it, as of a wonderful promise that had not been fulfilled. But this tenderness, too, had passed, and so it had come about that I had almost entirely forgotten her. But now all that I had felt at the time had come to life again, stronger than ever, for I loved Friederike.

What had recently been enigmatic, now appeared to me quite clear. Late in the evening we were sitting on the shore, by ourselves; the little boy had gone to bed. In the afternoon I had begged her to come, quite casually, speaking of the beauty of the sea by night, and how wonderful it was when everything around was still, to sit on the shore and look out into the great obscurity. She had said nothing but I knew she would come. And now we were sitting on the shore almost silent, holding each other’s hands, and I felt that Friederike would belong to me whenever I wished. Why speak of the past, I thought — and I knew she was thinking of our first meeting again after our separation. Were we still the same as we were then? We were so easy, so unconstrained; memories fluttered high above us like distant summer birds. Perhaps she had had other experiences during those seven years, even as I — what did it matter to me? We were people in the present day who were struggling towards each other. Yesterday she was unfortunate, perhaps, or frivolous; to-day she sat silently beside me near the sea, and held my hand, and longed to be in my arms.

We went slowly together the few steps to her house. The long black shadows of the trees lay across the road.

“We will go for a sail early to-morrow morning,” I said.

“Yes,” she answered.

“I will wait on the landing-stage at seven o’clock...”

“Where shall we go?” she asked.

“To the island over there... where the lighthouse stands; do you see it?”

“Oh, yes, that red light. Is it far?”

“An hour — we can be back very soon.”

“Good-night,” she said, and entered the vestibule.

I went away. “In a few days you will perhaps again have forgotten me,” I thought, “but tomorrow shall be a beautiful day.”

I was earlier on the landing-stage than she. The little boat waited; old Jansen had hoisted the sail, and was sitting at the helm, smoking his pipe. I sprang in, and the waves rocked me up and down. I sipped the minutes of waiting like a morning draught. The road, along which I looked was still empty of people. After a quarter of an hour Friederike appeared. I saw her in the distance, and it seemed to me as if she walked more rapidly than usual; when she reached the landing-stage I stood up; she could now see me for the first time and greeted me with a smile. At last she was at the end of the landing-stage; I held out my hand and helped her into the boat. Jansen loosed the rope, and the boat glided away. We sat close together; she held my arm. She was dressed all in white and looked like a girl of eighteen.

“What is there to see on the island?” she asked.

I could not help laughing.

She blushed and said: “The lighthouse, at least?”

“And the church, perhaps,” I added.

“Ask the man...” she looked at Jansen.

I asked him: “How old is the church on the island?”

But he did not understand a word of German; after this attempt we felt more alone with one another than before.

“Is that also an island over there?” she said, looking across.

“No,” I answered, “that is the mainland, Sweden.”

“It is even more beautiful,” she said.

“Yes,” I answered— “but one must be able to remain there... a long time... always.”

If she had said to me now: “Come, we will go together to another land, and never come back again” — I would have gone. As we glided along in the boat, with the fresh breeze blowing, and the clear sky above us, it seemed to me like a triumphal progress, and we ourselves a kingly pair, all the earlier circumstances of our life wiped out.

Soon we could discern the little houses on the island; the white church on the hill gradually stood out, and at last the whole island lay spread out before us, in clear outlines. Our boat sailed along the shore. We passed some little fishing boats; on one of them the oars had been taken in, and it floated lazily on the water. Friederike directed her eyes mostly towards the island; but she saw nothing. In less than an hour we arrived at the port; it was enclosed by a wooden jetty which made it seem like a swimming bath.

Some children stood on the jetty. We went up the steps and slowly along the shore, the children following, but they were soon left behind. The whole village was before us; it consisted at most of twenty houses lying

here and there. Our feet sank in the fine brown sand, which had been brought up by the sea. On a sunny open space, reaching out to the water, nets were spread to dry. A few women sat at the house doors mending nets. When we had walked a hundred steps we were quite alone. We had turned into a narrow track which led from the houses to the end of the island where the lighthouse stands. To our left, across a strip of thinly cultivated land that became narrower and narrower, lay the sea; on our right rose the hill, and on the top of it we could see the path leading to the church, which was now behind us. Over it all lay bright sunshine and stillness. — Friederike and I had said nothing. I felt no wish to talk; to me it was infinitely pleasant to saunter with her in this peaceful place.

But she began to talk.

"Eight days ago," she said....

"Yes —?"

"I did not know... never imagined, towards whom I was travelling."

I answered nothing.

"Ah, how beautiful it is," she cried and seized my hand.

I felt myself drawn to her; I wanted to clasp her in my arms and kiss her eyes.

"Yes?" I asked softly.

She was silent and rather serious.

We had come to the houses that had been built round the lighthouse; here the path ended; we should have to return. A narrow field path led steeply up the hill. I stopped.

"Come," she said.

As we now went, we could see the church, and drew nearer to it. It was very warm. I put my arm round Friederike's neck; she was obliged to remain quite close to me if she did not wish to follow behind. I stroked her hot cheeks with my hand.

"Why was it we heard nothing from you all that time?" she asked suddenly. "I, at least," she added, looking at me.

"Why," I repeated surprised.

"Yes."

"How could I?"

"Oh, that's it," she said. "You were hurt, then?"

I was too astonished to make any answer.

"Well, what did you really think?"

"What I—"

"Yes — or did you forget all about it?"

"Of course I remembered. Why do you speak of it now?"

"I have long wanted to ask you," she said.

"Go on," I answered, deeply moved.

"You looked upon it as a mere caprice — oh, yes," she added quickly, as she saw I was about to contradict her— "but I tell you it was not. I suffered in those years more than anyone knows."

"For what?"

"Now... when you were with us.... Why do you ask? — At the beginning I myself.... But why do I tell you this?"

I seized her arm violently. "Tell me... I beg you... I love you."

"And I you," she cried out suddenly; took my two hands and kissed them— "always — always."

“I beg you tell me more,” I said, “everything, everything....”

She spoke as we went slowly along the field path in the sun.

“At the beginning I said to myself: ‘He is a child.’... I was willing to be a mother to you. But the time when you had to leave came nearer and nearer....”

She interrupted herself, then went on’:

“And at last it came — I did not mean — I do not know what drove me on. And when I was with you before I had not wished to kiss you — but....”

“Go on, go on,” I said.

“And then I suddenly said to you that you must go — and you had meant to go, it was quite a comedy, wasn’t it?”

“I don’t understand you.”

“That is what I thought all the time. I wanted to write and tell you.... But where?... So... the reason I sent you away, was... I got frightened.”

“I knew that.”

“If you knew — why did I never hear from you again?” she cried excitedly.

“Why did you get frightened,” I asked, beginning to understand.

“Because I believed someone was near.”

“You believed? How was that?”

“I thought I heard steps on the landing. That was it. Steps. I thought — it was he.... Then terror seized me — it would have been too terrible if he — oh, I won’t think of it. — But no one was there — no one. He did not come home till late in the evening, when you had long, long been gone.” While she was telling me this I felt as if something froze within me. And when she had finished I looked at her as if I would ask her: “Who are you?” I turned involuntarily to the port, where I saw the sail of our boat gleaming, and I thought: “How long, how infinitely long ago it was since we came to this island.” For I landed here with a woman I loved, and now a stranger walks beside me. I could not utter a word. She scarcely perceived it; she was hanging on my arm, and mistook it for the silence of love. I thought of him. So he had never said anything to her. She did not know, she had never known, that he saw her lying at my feet. He had shut the door and sneaked away, and later... hours later, returned, and said nothing to her. And he had lived all these years at her side without betraying himself by one word. He had forgiven her and she did not know it. We had arrived at the church, it was scarcely ten steps away. A steep path would take us in a few minutes to the village. I turned into it. She followed me.

“Give me your hand,” she said, “I am coming too.” I held it out without turning round. “What is the matter with you?” she asked. I could not answer, and only pressed her hand hard, which seemed to calm her. Then I said, merely for the sake of saying something: “It is a pity, we might have seen the church.” — She laughed: “We passed it by without noticing it.”

“Would you like to go back?” I asked.

“Oh, no, I shall be glad to be sitting in the boat again. I should like one day to go sailing alone with you, without the man.”

“I do not know how to sail a boat.”

“Oh,” she said, and was silent, as if something had happened to her of which she did not wish to speak. — I asked no questions. We were soon on the jetty. The boat lay ready. The children who had greeted us on our arrival were there again. They looked at us with round blue eyes. We sailed away. The sea had become perfectly calm; if we shut our eyes we could scarcely perceive that we were moving along.

“You shall lie at my feet,” said Friederike, and I stretched myself along the bottom of the boat, and put my head on Friederike’s lap. I was glad I did not have to look her in the face. She talked, and it seemed to me as if the sound came from the far distance. I heard what she said but at the same time went on with my own thoughts.

I felt as if something were forcing me away from her.

“We will go out on the sea this evening together,” she said. A shadow seemed to me to rise between us.

“This evening, on the sea, in a rowing boat. You can row?”

“Yes,” I said. I was forced away from her by the deep forgiveness that silently enfolded her, and of which she did not know.

She continued talking. “We will let ourselves float out to sea, alone. — Why don’t you say anything?” she asked.

“I am happy,” I said.

I was forced away from her by the silent Fate, that had protected her all these years, though she knew nothing of it.

We glided along.

For a moment the thought flashed through my mind: “Tell her. Tear away this shadow, then she will be like other women again for you, and you will desire her.” But I could not say it. — We arrived.

I sprang out of the boat, and helped her to land.

“The boy must have wanted me. I will go quickly... by myself.”

There were a number of people on the shore; I saw several of them looking at us. “And this evening,” she said; “at nine o’clock I shall.... But what’s the matter with you?”

“I am very happy,” I said.

“This evening,” she said, “at nine o’clock I shall be here on the shore, with you. — Au revoir.” And she hastened away.

“Au revoir,” I, too, said, and stood there. — But I shall never see her again.

As I write these lines, I am already far away — further with every second; I write them in the coupé of a railway train which left for Copenhagen an hour ago. It is just nine o’clock. She is standing on the shore and waiting for me. When I shut my eyes, I see her figure before me. But it is not a woman who wanders to and fro there on the shore in the twilight — a shadow glides up and down.

HIS HOUR OF FAME

I



AUGUST WITTE HAD already been sitting for half-an-hour in the café with a pile of newspapers before him at which he had not looked, when at last Emerich Berger appeared very hurriedly.

"Well," August called across to him, "so you have come at last. It is certainly high time. You leave everything for one to do alone."

"Pardon," said Emerich, as he sat down, "I had another call I was obliged to make, and I found it very difficult to get away — it is to be hoped I have not overlooked anything? Is everything already arranged?"

"Certainly," answered August, slightly raising his eyebrows— "luckily I am here."

"So there is really nothing more to be done, before the thing commences."

"Nothing more now. I have only to arrange a meeting with Dobrdal to give him the last instructions."

"Then you have engaged Dobrdal?"

"Why not? He looks very decent. And then everyone knows that he does not belong to us." Emerich nodded affirmatively, and then asked: "What about the laurel crown?"

"It is already procured, and at the theatre."

"Well then everything is in perfect order. — And besides ourselves no one knows anything about it, is that not so?"

"No one. Fred indeed we shall have to tell, because he will be with us in the box."

Emerich shook his head.

"Don't you think we shall rather — surprise Fred?"

"Yes, why not?"

"You know, I only mean that Fred is sometimes... odd. It might be a disadvantage."

"I can't help that. We shall have to allow ourselves yet another joke. And the responsibility is all on our shoulders, eh?"

"Of course. On yours."

"Very well, on mine. Such an original idea would never have occurred to any of you."

"That is so," laughed Emerich, "but somehow the Blandini is at the back of it, I would wager... and it is true, I believe—"

At this moment he received such a severe look from August that, instead of saying anything further, he nodded his head in an embarrassed way, put a piece of sugar in his coffee, and began to smoke quietly.

"Well, how are you?" said Fred, who now entered, and held out his hand to both young men. "Thank you very much for the ticket for the box," turning to August, "only, may I be allowed to ask, why are we going to this silly operetta again?"

"You shall hear immediately," answered August; "here is Herr Dobrdal."

"Who?" asked Fred.

"You, marker," called out August. "Do you see the gentleman standing by the billiard table, speaking to Franz? Bring him over here to us."

"Dobrdal?" Fred turned inquiringly to Emerich. "What has he to do with it? Who is Dobrdal?"

Emerich looked at the man who, directed by the waiter to their table, came over and bowed to them.

He was a little man in a brown ulster and a fur cap. He dangled a monocle to and fro on a ribbon.

August nodded at him condescendingly. “Goodevening, Herr Dobrdal, won’t you have something?”

“Oh, it doesn’t matter.”

“Well, take a seat.”

“I will take the liberty.”

“I asked you to come to the café, so that for the last time we.... But won’t you give your order? Here is the waiter.”

“Bring me a melange,” said Herr Dobrdal, and, taking off his fur cap, laid it on the table.

Emerich carefully picked it up and laid it on a chair.

“Thank you very much,” said Herr Dobrdal. “Now,” August began again, “how many people have you got?”

“Forty, and well distributed.”

“In the stalls as well?”

“Of course, with the gallery alone we could do nothing. The stalls are the most important.”

“And are you going to see these people again, before the thing starts?”

“Of course, I have got all the tickets still in my pocket.”

“That’s good. Now listen, Herr Dobrdal. We will go over it once more: In the first act — nothing. Yes, I should even like the applause at the close of the act to be no more than usual.”

“Herr von Witte, that won’t do. The manager insists on three calls to the front.”

“I don’t like that.”

“But don’t you think, Herr von Witte, the stalls might applaud after the first act.”

“Very good. Now comes the second act — and we must talk that over. First of all there is the chorus.”

“I know that, Herr von Witte.”

“Please listen. After the chorus, the Blandini remains, as you know, alone on the stage, and is frightfully sad; she throws herself on the divan. At this moment Herr Roland enters.”

“And now we let loose,” added Dobrdal.

“Roland?” cried Fred.

“But that is where the humour comes in,” said Emerich lightly.

“At the moment,” went on August, “Herr Roland enters — thunderous applause.”

“Good,” said Dobrdal.

“With the applause,” said August, “they must shout ‘Bravo’; while it is continuing, the wreath will be handed up out of the orchestra. Now Roland has to say: ‘Beautiful lady... or beautiful woman... my master sends you these jewels.’ Then the Blandini sings her Aria while Roland stands at the door. When the Blandini has finished she walks up to Roland and gives him back the jewels.”

“How fine the Blandini is,” remarked Emerich.

August regarded him gloomily. Emerich reddened; August continued: “Roland takes the jewels and says: ‘What shall I say to my master’ — or something to that effect. The Blandini answers ‘Nothing.’ — Now Roland bows and goes off. — And now: colossal applause.”

“Shouting,” added Dobrdal.

“Right: uproarious shouting, calls: ‘Come out.’ And you must simply not let your people leave off until Roland has come out and bowed. — You quite understand, Herr Dobrdal?”

“Herr von Witte, you can rely on me.”

“So now,” concluded August, “we are all ready.”

Dobrdal acquiesced, hastily drank off the rest of his melange, bowed and went.

"Now may I at last know," said Fred, "what all this means?"

"I will tell you," answered August.

"I am very curious," said Fred.

Emerich listened attentively.

"First," continued August, "I do not exactly see why everything should have a meaning."

Emerich appeared disappointed, Fred laughed. "And second," added August quickly in an irritated voice, "if you two had sufficient ability to think out the matter, you would not have asked. I won't say that in the beginning I thought of anything beyond putting a good joke on the stage: but what we are doing is more than that, it is something good, I might call it ingenious: we give pleasure to a poor devil of whom as a rule no one thinks. The great actors get sufficient appreciation, I find, but the lesser folk are equally essential to the plays."

"That is true," put in Emerich.

"Therefore my jest has a deeper significance, and when the people in the theatre this evening enter into it, as they undoubtedly will, by their applause, perhaps without suspecting it, they will give an ovation, in the person of Herr Roland, to all the lesser folk whom usually they forget."

"Certainly without suspecting it," said Fred, "for you had no idea five minutes ago what a really noble man you are."

"Emerich was quite right," remarked August quickly.

Emerich assumed an important air, but asked himself in what he had been so right.

"It is no good telling you anything," went on August, which startled Emerich, who looked at Fred sympathetically.

"You have spoiled all the humour of it," August said.

"I really don't understand you," laughed Fred. "You are as upset as if you had got a smack. Noble things are always done unconsciously, otherwise they would not be noble at all. When a joke occurs to an ordinary fellow, in accordance with his nature it will be a vulgar one, but when a joke occurs to you, in accordance with your nature it will be a good deed."

August looked at him angrily. "Perhaps you will deprive us of the pleasure of your company at the performance?"

"Certainly not," answered Fred lightly, "besides you have invited me to supper afterwards with you and Emerich and the Blandini."

"I had forgotten."

"But I have not."

"It is time to go," August said.

They paid, left the café and went to the theatre. On the way Emerich contemplated first one, and then the other, and reflected that here were two men who, on a rather important matter, had different points of view. So he took heart, and, as they alighted and went up the stairs to the box, said: "Children, behave!..."

August made no answer. But Fred pressed Emerich's hand and said: "I will try."

The door of the box was open, and as the three friends entered the first chords of the Overture gaily resounded.

II

The first act was over.

Friedrich Roland sat in his dressing-room, alone. He wore a fantastic costume — black and red velvet jacket, and dark-blue knee breeches and a splendid wig of chestnut brown hair on which a cap was perched. He had laid his sword across his knee, and was staring into the mirror, out of which his face, painted youthfully red and with a false moustache, looked back at him. He had sat like this almost without moving since the beginning of the piece. Now and again through the closed door he heard the footsteps and voices of the chorus girls, who hurried past between the stage and the dressingrooms, and then all would be quiet again. Roland was glad he was alone. He almost loved the new operetta because neither of the two colleagues with whom he shared the dressing-room had a part in it. They were not the kind of men with whom he had anything in common; they were contented people, who always carried out their insignificant roles like honest working-men, and asked nothing more of him than the modest efficiency they themselves possessed. Roland was quite aware that as one of them he had his place, but at the same time he felt that in reality he did not belong to them at all. He might have been able to become something quite different, if only he had had luck. He thought of this now as he sat painted before the mirror; as he had thought of it hour after hour. Yet now, after a ten years' engagement at this theatre he could not step upon the stage without a miserable feeling of resentment and mortification, which he had never been able to conceal. His companions, with the quick instinct of lesser men, had discovered his most sensitive points, and all his little mannerisms: the gentle tired way in which he spoke, the slow and seeming proud way in which he used to walk gravely along, yes, even a certain habit of turning his head sideways, and at the same time half closing his eyes, were pointed out as the absurd signs of his dissatisfaction. Whether he had once had talent no one knew, there had never been any mention of it; for years the parts he had been allotted were pages, servants, slaves, conspirators; those that are grouped together on the programme without any names; at most he was second servant, or third conspirator. There were no grounds for assuming that he had more cause to complain than any of the others who were selected for the same rôles as himself; they looked back on the same sort of career as Roland's, and had for years played heroes, lovers or villains at small theatres. There were probably several among them who also recalled that time with painful feelings; and perhaps their dissatisfaction had also been remarked by others', but all the jokes, all the malice fell to his share, because they saw that he suffered most under them. At the beginning he had tried to defend himself, to answer back joking with joking, but could not get the knack of it; he wanted to join in with the others, but had not the right temperament. So he began slowly to let himself go down, and became reserved; often all day long no one would hear a word from his mouth. And this too fitted into the idea they had formed of him once for all; it was the absurd pride of the "misunderstood genius." His reputation outgrew by degrees the narrow sphere in which he worked; everyone in the little town who was interested in the stage folk, knew his name, around which many jokes had accumulated; the reporter in his smartest notices, the public in jesting conversations used the name Roland to denote a type of actor who was insignificant but conceited. So in its way his name had become popular, and in a different sense from that of Roland's earlier hopes, his yearning after fame appeared to obtain fulfilment. Now it had gone so far that he envied the unrecognised. All who might still hope that their fate would take a happy turn and that they might somehow emerge out of their obscurity into the light of fame. To him this was forever barred. Two years before he had ventured for the last time to beg the manager for a better part; it had been smilingly refused, and Roland understood what that meant. Then once more he thought, for the last time, of leaving the town and travelling again in the provinces, where he had spent the first ten years of his stage career; but the agent declared it was too late, and the experience he had himself gathered in his time in hero parts in little Bohemian and Moravian towns, was also not sufficiently encouraging for him to exert the needful energy to

seek for an engagement himself. It was best to resign himself and like other quiet workers, perform the daily work by which he might live. He had become very lonely; he had no part with either the principals or the small actors. In earlier days he had gone regularly after the theatre to a tavern where a harmless company of people from the audience and small shopkeepers assembled, who were proud to mix with the actors, but even here they had not failed to make a joke when Roland appeared; and sometimes a kindly word with which he might be greeted, he would take, with increasing suspicion, as intended to be malicious, and before long he left off going. He only went now when he had first drunk a few glasses of wine somewhere else by himself; that made it easier for him to believe in the friendliness of other people, and even to endure malicious remarks with equanimity. Yes, at such moments he was animated by the singular hope that some extraordinary crisis would some day thrust him to the front; he believed it quite possible that he might become famous, and dared to despise the scorn often openly expressed before him. It was not often however that wine created this feeling in him, as a rule he drank it like one too deeply hurt to feel any satisfaction. In earlier days little adventures with women had brought a last glimmer of youth into his life; but for the last few years that also had died out, and he no longer responded to the tender and speaking glances which even now sometimes rested upon him. During the last few weeks it had happened several times that he found violets on the little table in his dressing-room; he had no idea from whom they had come; surely it must be one of the jokes that had often been played on him; a joke like the affectionate letters making an appointment, at which no one appeared, or else the prompter or one of the chorus girls, hugely diverted by his abashed face.

The violets were here again to-day; he had not touched them, and even if they were meant seriously, what difference could it make? He was so absolutely crushed that he was unable to feel any pleasure. He thought of nothing but his loneliness and the way people laughed at him. Sometimes the thought flashed through his mind, how will it end? And there would come to him strange notions from which he had to turn away. But one of them held him fast for a long time: he wanted to publish an appeal to the public in the newspapers, making it known how people tormented him; it should begin with the words “Noble people.” He had once begun to write it, here in his dressing-room, for his table at home always shook — but he did not finish it. It seemed to him like a begging letter. And they might laugh. Something else had occurred to him lately. He wanted to talk seriously, just once, with the Blandini, the prima donna of the theatre, who had sometimes said a few kind words to him at rehearsal; he wanted to tell her that he was not really comic, as people always imagined, but... he did not dare. And then one night he came home rather drunk from the tavern, and a quite mad idea came into his head; he would take the first opportunity to fall on his knee in the middle of the play, and begin at once imploringly: “Oh, noble people,..” and pour out all his grief and misery; he knew he would be able to put such wonderful pathos into his voice that no one would be able to withstand him; they would recognise then that he was a great actor, and many would weep and he himself perhaps with them. — This idea came to him again and again, not as a serious possibility, but like the memory of a vivid and beautiful dream.

The bell rang to summon him to the stage. He got up, went along the passage and slowly descended the ten wooden stairs. Now he was behind the scenes. Some chorus girls wished him good-evening. Roland went a few steps further, and placed himself close behind the door, through which he was to enter upon the stage. He heard the Blandini singing. He awaited his cue... there... now he was on; the stage manager, who stood near him, gave a sign; an assistant on either side opened the door, and Roland went on to the stage. But he was rather too soon. The stage manager had given the signal too hastily. Louder applause broke out, evidently for the Blandini. “Her popularity is always increasing,” he thought, “even on an occasion like this.”... The clapping went on and on. — And Roland involuntarily looked at the Blandini, who at first had turned towards

the audience, but now had drawn nearer to him. He heard her whisper: “Do you understand?”... and the applause grew louder and louder. Roland looked up at the gallery.... Suddenly he believed he heard his name clearly shouted.... It was certainly a delusion. The Blandini said: “Do you hear?” Roland answered “Yes.”

“Your name,” said the Blandini. The applause became deafening and the shout “Roland” louder. “What is it?” thought Roland. “Have I gone mad? Am I dreaming?”

“Say it,” whispered the Blandini. “What?” asked Roland bewildered. “Your words... about the jewels.” — And Roland began to speak: “Beautiful lady, these jewels...” But he could get no further. The applause continued, some hisses now mingled with it. It rose almost to a tumult. “A wreath,” said the Blandini, and Roland, believing it was intended for her, hastened to the front of the stage, bowed and was handed a gigantic laurel wreath, which he at once offered to the singer. But she whispered: “For you.” — He could not understand; his eyes fell on the card attached to it and he saw his own name. For a second a wave of ecstasy surged over him; he thought “I am a great actor. Everyone recognises it, although I play an insignificant part”; he mechanically took the card in his left hand — and read: “To the gifted actor, Roland, from his grateful contemporaries.”... And suddenly he heard the theatre resound with laughter; he let the card fall from his hand — he looked at the audience, saw a thousand lifted clapping hands, and the faces of the people lighted up with amusement. He could not understand. They laughed louder and louder. Suddenly realisation came to him. He felt he must sink down and hide his face: they were laughing at him... mocking him. The whole of the public had gathered together to rejoice in his downfall — his, Herr Friedrich Roland. It cut him to the heart: was it thus he reached the summit of fame... He felt it so acutely that he neither saw nor heard anything more, and stared at the noisy multitude as at silence and emptiness, and all in a moment, as if he had compelled them — they were actually still. And he knew that he had not yet spoken his lines; perhaps the Blandini had whispered to him that he must speak. And he said, without a quiver in his voice, looking quietly in the singer’s face: “Beautiful lady, my master sends you these jewels.” — The Blandini took the jewels and gave him a long look; it forced the thought from him: she did not do that at the rehearsals, and he asked himself “Why?”... Then he heard her say to him: “Don’t trouble about it.” Now he perceived that the orchestra had begun again and were playing the opening bars of the Aria; the Blandini took up her position and sang. The Aria seemed very long. Roland meanwhile stood at the door and listened to the well-known voice; the Blandini went on singing; it seemed as if she sang for hours. Roland was conscious of nothing else, only that the stage seemed to heave up and down, and a humming as of a thousand little meaningless voices sounded in his ears; but the Blandini’s Aria rang out clearly, as if it would pierce the walls and pass out into the free air; it seemed to Roland as if everyone, all over the world could hear the song if only they would listen. It was good of her to sing so long because he began to be afraid before she had finished; he remembered how the clapping and laughter had resounded before she began; it would surely burst out again... and he felt he must be strong, to be able to bear it once more — it had been so horrible. — The Aria was over. The Blandini held out the jewels. And Roland asked: “What shall I say to my master?” — And the Blandini answered: “Nothing.” — She said it with a tremble in her voice which had never been there before. And she looked at him with imploring eyes, as if she wanted to keep him there on the stage, and yet he had to go. He bowed and the door opened; he made a step towards it — and then it broke out again: “Bravo! Roland! Roland! Bravo!” He found himself behind the scenes, with the scene-shifter and a few of the chorus who had drifted out. The youthful comedian was also there. “A masterly performance,” he said to Roland. The manager came out. “What does it mean? Are the people mad? Do you know, Roland, what it means?” — Roland shook his head. “Now, what are we to do?” cried the manager. “They are clapping out there again. There is nothing else for it, you must go out and bow,” said the manager. “Yes,” said Roland. He now noticed

that he was still holding the wreath in his hand, and was going to let it fall. “Hold on to it,” said the manager, “that’s all right. Ready!” he called. The door flew open, and Roland stepped out on to the stage. The shouts of “Bravo!” grew louder; laughter clearly mingled with them. The comedian said to the manager: “My opinion is, it’s a wager.”

“Probably,” answered the manager; “everyone gets his hour of fame.”

Roland again stepped back, the door was closed. He let the wreath fall, and went slowly away towards his dressing-room. A few chorus girls laughingly tried to shake hands with him, but he passed them by unseeingly, his arms hanging limply down. Then he felt himself pulled back. “You must go out once more, the people won’t be quiet.” Roland turned round, went again on the stage and bowed low. He appeared to find so much humour in the fact that people had at last noticed him, that the laughter of the audience rang out more gaily and cheerfully; many at this moment quite liked him. That dream suddenly flashed again through his mind, and he asked himself if now were not the right moment to fall on his knees and cry out: “Noble people, mercy! Mercy!...” But he knew that under it all there was no mercy. And in the midst of all the shouting and laughing around him, such a terrible feeling of forlornness came over him that his heart stood still. As he went back he cast a side glance at the Blandini; she had tears in her eyes and gazed past him. Now at last the noise was over; the manager clapped Roland on the shoulder, and said laughing: “Your hour of fame.” There were a number of people standing behind the scenes, actors, chorus girls, scene-shifters, delighting in the joke and ready to continue it in the dressing-rooms; but Roland went by with bowed head, seeing and hearing nothing. He went slowly up the ten stairs, crept across the passage, opened the door of his dressing-room and went in, shutting the door behind him. The key creaked in the lock, and below the fun went on.

III

For an hour the three young men had sat in the private room and waited. The Blandini did not arrive.

“She won’t come,” said Fred.

“That’s impossible,” answered August. “We arranged it together yesterday, and besides I wrote to her this afternoon.”

“Do you know what I think?” remarked Emerich.

“What?” asked August.

“We must send to Roland....”

“Don’t begin that again, the joke is over, the people have been amused, it was something new — and now... an end.”

“All right,” said Emerich. “But I meant, we must send something to Roland in the morning.”

“Money?” asked Fred.

“Of course, money is really owing to him, don’t you think, Gustl?”

“We can send him some,” answered August, curtly.

Fred looked in front of him. All were silent. Suddenly August got up. “I am going along.”

“To the theatre?” asked Emerich.

“No. To her house. She can’t be at the theatre now, it is closed.”

“So you think it possible she has forgotten your invitation?”

“Why will you persist,” said August angrily as he pulled on his overcoat.

“Are you sure to come back?” asked Emerich.

"Yes, of course; with her. Au revoir."

He went quickly out. He had to pass the door of another little room; out of it came the sound of a waltz, thumped out by a rather unmusical man upon a hard piano. August went out into the open air. The street was not dark. The snow which lay on the ground shed a faint luminance. It was snowing in great slow flakes. August Witte decided to go on foot, he felt he was excited and hoped the calm, white night would soothe him. He felt inclined to blame Fred for his bad temper, he had spoiled the whole evening from the beginning by his sarcastic, almost contemptuous air. It was true he could not reproach Fred because the Blandini had not come, although he would gladly have done so — therefore there must be another reason. Probably she was angry with him; well. — Had he not done what she wanted? He would never have thought of that trick for this evening, nor carried it out, if it had not been for the Blandini who for some time past had insisted on talking about the wretched creature: he had the most interesting head that she had ever seen, and surely had much more talent than all the others. At first she had only said it as a joke; but as August imprudently began to contradict, she wilfully persisted in her opinion, declaring at length that August was jealous. — That made him quite furious. — Jealous of Herr Roland! — Ah, he was quite well aware of whom he had reason to be jealous. From the beginning the comedian had been his rival; therefore there was no question of anyone else... over this Herr Roland he positively was not going to get angry again. He had continually resolved not to talk about him any more with the Blandini — and he would be with her scarcely five minutes before the wrangle began again. — He felt it was unwise; that he was driving the Blandini straight into something he had feared for a long time. — Now, as he hurried through the street he knew what it was he feared. He knew it was no love of a joke that had been the reason of the trick this evening, nor to give special pleasure to Herr Roland, although he had been firmly convinced Herr Roland would be overjoyed; no — he had cherished the quiet hope that it would make the wretched actor forever ridiculous and impossible to the Blandini, and she would laugh at August's droll idea, and be his best friend again as she had been before; he thought that after this joke the Blandini would finally dismiss Herr Roland to his proper place. He had stationed himself at the beginning of the play so that in front of his friends she might fall on his neck and say, as in earlier happier times: "You are my sweet and clever Afferl." But in the theatre he soon perceived that the matter had fallen out differently from what he anticipated. During the storm of applause after the entrance of Roland, the Blandini had cast an angry glance at the box in which he was sitting with his two friends, and as Roland went off for the last time she looked so forlornly at the door that August had felt a mightily increasing anger in his heart. And now the nearer he drew to the house in which the Blandini lived the less he could conceal from himself that what in truth he trembled at was lest he should find them together. He hastened his steps-ground the corner — and found himself at the door of the house. It stood in a wide street behind the Ring; no one was in sight. He listened and heard the muffled sound of a carriage coming along the snow-covered road. He took his hand off the bell he had been about to ring, and waited.

The carriage came round the corner and stopped before the door of the house. He knew it well, he had hired it for the Blandini himself. In a moment he was beside it. He felt his agitation suddenly subside. For he was perfectly certain that the next moment she would step out of the carriage with Roland — and everything then would be absolutely at an end. — The door was opened, a woman stepped out of the carriage and shut the door behind her. It was the Blandini. August hastened up and quickly peered through the window into the carriage. It was empty. He breathed again. Then he cried: "Albine." She turned quickly round and directly she recognised him, made a step towards him: "Do you dare to come here?"

"Ah, that's good," cried August, suddenly becoming conscious of his rights again. "Do I dare? Where have you been? What have you been doing? I waited two hours for you. What do you call that?"

“My dear, you may wait,” said the Blandini, “we two have finished with one another.”

“Why?”

“Do you ask that? First, do not shout, there is no need for the coachman to know, — and second—”

At this moment the door of the house opened; the Blandini hurried into the vestibule, shutting the door behind her. August trembled with rage. But he did not wish to lower himself before the coachman and porter, and remained standing there quite quietly. He reflected. What should he do? Wait? — Hasten after her? — He ran the risk of being refused admittance. Walk up and down there till the morning? Make a scandal for her in the street in the early hours? He was so angry that he could hear his own hard breathing that was almost a groan. Two minutes later the house door opened and Albine appeared again. She hastened to the carriage, calling out something to the coachman. August hurried after her and pulled her by the arm. “Where are you going?”

“What’s that to you?” She freed herself from him and jumped into the carriage; he after her.

“I suppose I may drive in my own carriage,” he said between his teeth.

“Pardon.”

The carriage drove on.

“May I ask for an explanation?” said August. She did not answer.

“Where have you been?”

She was silent.

“Were you with him?”

“No!” she said, “but I am looking for him.”

“What?”

“Yes.”

“Are you his love?”

“No; but you may rely upon it I shall be to-day.”

August reached out his hand for the speaking-tube to the coachman.

She pulled his arm violently away.

August looked out of the window; they were crossing the Ring.

Albine looked at him sideways.

“Does it interest you where we go?”

August trembled, and did not answer.

She went on talking with cruel satisfaction.” I waited for him after the theatre, but he had already gone.... I went to his house but he wasn’t at home. Then I went to the tavern where he sometimes goes, but he was not there. And do you know why I went home just now? Because I left word specially, both at his house and the tavern, that when he arrived they were to send him on to me immediately. And now we are going again to the theatre, for I shall have no peace until I find him, — do you understand?”

August said nothing, but he would willingly have strangled her.

The carriage drove across the bridge, and a few minutes later stopped in a narrow street at the little back door of the theatre which led to the stage. The Blandini sprang out of the carriage; August after her. The door had long ago been locked. A night-watchman passing by looked curiously at the young woman who was ringing the bell here at midnight. After a few minutes the little door was opened and the porter appeared with a lantern in his hand....

“Jesus, Fraulein Blandini, what’s the matter? What has happened? Have you forgotten something?”

“Just light me along.”

August stood behind her.

"It is nothing to do with the gentleman," said the Blandini, "close the door."

She pushed August back, shut the door herself, and the porter locked it. While she hurried with the porter through the narrow passage that led down to the stage she asked him: "Did you see Roland go away?"

The porter reflected. "Yes, Fraulein. Surely no one is left in the dressing-rooms? I locked up two hours ago."

"Did you see him go away?" she repeated almost imploringly.

They were standing now on the great dark stage. From the lantern which the porter held in his hand a cone of light fell on the white prompter's box. The coulisses on either side appeared immeasurably heightened in the darkness. The iron curtain hung there like a giant wall.

"Yes... did I see..." said the porter, "I don't really remember. I am very sorry, Fraulein, so many people go by, a man does not look at each one, does he?"

The Blandini stood still a moment considering, then she ran quickly across the stage, through the coulisses, to the little staircase. She put her foot on the first stair.

"But Fraulein," cried the porter who was hurrying after her with the lantern, "that leads to the gentlemen's dressing-rooms."

She did not answer, but went so quickly up the stairs that she was soon in darkness, and was obliged to wait for the man stumbling after her with the lantern. She drew a deep breath. When the porter was again beside her and a pale glimmer of light lit up the passage, she asked: "Where is Roland's dressing-room?"

"Well, Fraulein, I don't myself know. I never come up here. But the names are written above."

She took the lantern out of his hand, and began, at random, to try and open the first door.

"Fraulein, that's not it; that's locked. The gentlemen mostly lock it themselves when they go out. And it's not Herr Roland's."

Fraulein Blandini ran along further; she held the lantern high to read the names above one door after the other. At last she arrived at the right one. Here a white sheet of paper was pasted up; three names were on it: Engelbert Brunn, Oswald Friedemann, Friedrich Roland. She groped for the handle, but this door too was locked.

The porter shook his head. "You know, Fraulein, if you have left something in there, it will be quite safe, and still there in the morning."

"You... you..." the Blandini turned to him, "Roland has always finished after the second act, he must have gone out earlier than the others, and you must have seen him?"

"Yes, Fraulein, it is possible that I did see him, as a man sees without noticing, but I know I don't remember it."

The Blandini remained standing a few moments in perplexity. Suddenly an idea occurred to her. She searched her pocket, and breathed again, relieved. "Perhaps it will fit," she whispered and produced the key of her dressing-room. She gave the porter the lantern to hold, and hastily put the key in the lock. It fitted. She turned it once, twice, seized the handle and opened the door. Opposite to her, just by the window, an immensely long figure seemed to be leaning. "Is it one of the costumes?" was her first thought. Then she wrenched the lantern out of the porter's hand, held it high, and screamed. "For God's sake," cried the porter, and rushed to the window. It was almost as if Herr Roland stood there alive, his arms hung limply down, his head had fallen low upon his breast. He was still in the costume he had worn that evening; even the false moustache was still on his lip; only the wig had fallen off, and his thin straight grey hair was sticking up.

"He's hung himself," the porter pushed forward... "hung himself." He placed the lantern on the little table

by the rouge pot and the wig. Then he took hold of the dead man by the hands, and felt along his arms up to his head... “with a pocket handkerchief,” he said. “Now, what shall we do, Fraulein?”

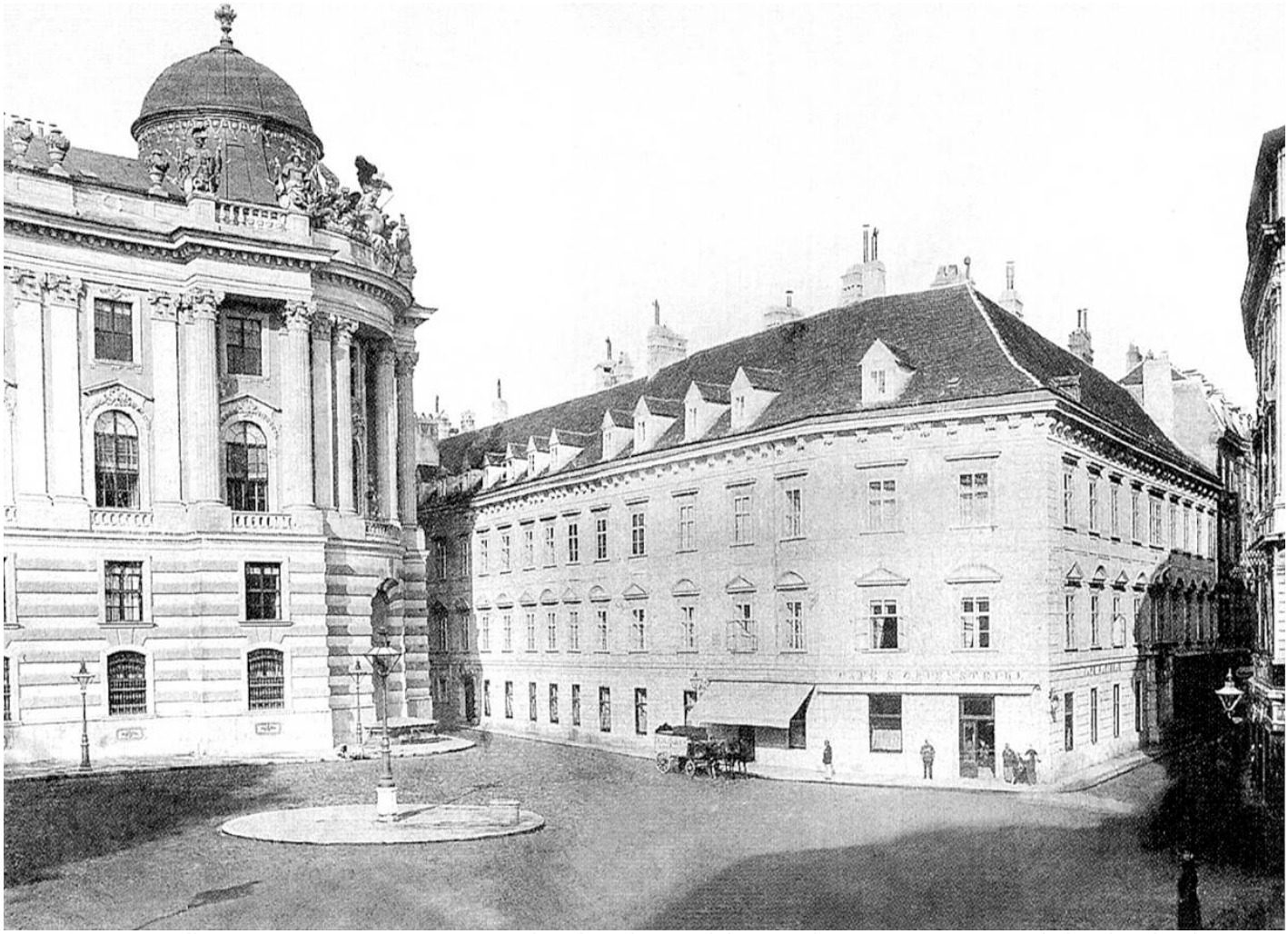
The Blandini stood without moving, and stared at the dead body.

“Don’t you think, Fraulein,” said the man, “I had better fetch up the gentleman from below, and I will go at the same time to the police and notify the affair,”

The Blandini pulled herself together a little, then she answered softly: “Yes, go to the police, I will stay here... but tell the gentleman below that he is to go away, that he is to go away at once, I will never see him again, tell him that, and if I find him still there, tell him, that I’ll spit in his face,”

She shrieked the last words so loudly that they accompanied the porter and echoed in his ears as he ran in the darkness across the empty stage.

The Plays



Café Griensteidl, Vienna. c. 1890 — from 1890, Schnitzler, along with his friends Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Richard Beer-Hofmann, was one of the leading figures of Young Vienna, a modern literary movement, whose preferred meeting place was Café Griensteidl.



Schnitzler Villa, Sternwartestraße, Vienna — Schnitzler purchased the villa in 1910 for a total of 95,000 crowns. It would remain his home for the rest of his life.



The house today

Anatol (1893)

A SEQUENCE OF DIALOGUES

Translated by Harley Granville-Barker, 1913

First published in 1893, this seven-act play featured an introduction by Loris, a pseudonym of the young Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Schnitzler's close friend. The plot takes place in late nineteenth century Vienna, depicting the many shallow and immature relationships of the bourgeois playboy Anatol. The first act, *Die Frage an das Schicksal* (The Question to Fate), earned Schnitzler the title of Psychologischer Tiefenforscher (psychological depth researcher) from Sigmund Freud. Although these one-act plays were much less probing than his later dramatic works, they underline Schnitzler's unique gift of characterisation and power to evoke moods, often in a detached and melancholic vein.

The opening act introduces Anatol and his friend Max, who discuss the problem that a man never can know for sure whether or not a woman is faithful to him. Anatol argues that, irrespective of love, women by their very nature can never be true. He also suspects his current lover Cora of infidelity. The constant uncertainty, against which he believes there is no recourse, almost drives him crazy. Max suggests that he should try hypnosis and his companion takes up this suggestion enthusiastically, as it offers him the opportunity to finally dispel his doubts. As soon as he makes the decision to try hypnosis, he has the opportunity to try it out, for Cora arrives home at that moment. He asks her if she is willing to be hypnotised by him and she is happy to comply.

He successfully hypnotizes Cora and asks her if she loves him; she replies, "Yes!" Encouraged by this, he now wants to address the question of fidelity, but it is apparent that he still fears the truth and would rather be tortured by doubt than face an unpleasant truth that would wound his pride. Nevertheless, Max words the question, "Are you faithful to me?" Anatol objects to the intelligibility of the question, finally even doubting the possibility of the existence of an answer, just to avoid having to ask. When Max finally points out to the unnerved Anatol that all his objections are nonsensical and contrived, he eventually decides that he wants to ask his lover, but not in the presence of Max, whom he sends out of the door. When alone with Cora, he is overwhelmed by his feelings and wakes her up, without having asked his question. Thus Anatol gambles away his opportunity to have "the question to fate" answered, and Cora playfully makes it clear that she will never let Anatol hypnotise her again.

Overall, the change in the nature of Anatol's relationships with women from act to act in this play is striking. In the first act, he effectively has the opportunity to get an answer to a "question to fate", to discover the truth. His lover is hypnotised, and in a sense Anatol is actually the "god" he feels he is. The power of knowledge is given to him. The responsibility for not using the power lies solely with him; he does not dare to ask the question, out of pride and because "imagination is a thousand times more important than the truth". This quasi-almighty position Anatol assumes changes more and more in later acts – in the "Episodes" act he isn't remembered, while in the "Farewell Supper" act Annie resists Anatol's attempt to enforce his position as the person with the sole right to determine the future of their relationship. In the "Wedding Morning" act, the initial position of the protagonist turns completely into its opposite: Anatol is completely at the mercy of his lover, who could ruin the planned wedding and thus completely sabotage Anatol's life plans — however

cursory — and Anatol cannot say or do anything to resolve the crisis. Significantly, it is not Anatol that resolves the crisis — Max has to help and bring the situation under control for Anatol.

Arthur Schnitzler.

Anatol.

Berlin, 1893.
Verlag des Bibliographischen Bureaus.
Alexanderstraße 2.

The first edition's title page

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Emilie in front of the fireplace — pencil drawing by Moritz Coschell, 1899

I. ASK NO QUESTIONS AND YOU'LL HEAR NO STORIES



ANATOL, *AN IDLE young bachelor, lives in a charming flat in Vienna. That he has taste, besides means to indulge it, may be seen by his rooms, the furniture he buys, the pictures he hangs on the walls. And if such things indicate character, one would judge, first by the material comfort of the place and then by the impatience for new ideas which his sense of what is beautiful to live with seems to show, that though a hedonist, he is sceptical of even that easy faith. Towards dusk one afternoon he comes home bringing with him his friend* MAX. *They reach the sitting-room, talking...*

MAX. Well, Anatol, I envy you.

ANATOL. My dear Max!

MAX. Perfectly astonishing. I've always said it was all tricks. But he went off to sleep under my very eyes... and then he danced when you told him he was a ballet dancer and cried when you said his sweetheart was dead... and he sentenced that criminal very soundly when you'd made him a judge.

ANATOL. Didn't he?

MAX. It's wizardry!

ANATOL. We can all be wizards to some extent

MAX. Perfectly uncanny.

ANATOL. Not more so than much else in life... not more uncanny than lots we've been finding out the last hundred years. If you'd suddenly proved to one of our ancestors that the world went round, he'd have turned giddy.

MAX. But this seems super-natural.

ANATOL. So must anything strange. What would a man think if he'd never seen a sunrise before, or watched the spring arrive... the trees and the flowers... and then felt himself falling in love.

MAX. Mesmerism...

ANATOL. Hypnotism.

MAX. Yes... I'll take care no one ever does it to me.

ANATOL. Where's the harm? I tell you to go to sleep. You settle down comfortably... off you go...

MAX. Then you tell me I'm a chimney-sweep, and up the chimney I go and get all over soot.

ANATOL. But, you know, it has great scientific possibilities. We're hardly on the threshold of them yet... worse luck.

MAX. Why worse luck?

ANATOL. I could make what I liked of the world for that fellow an hour ago. Can I shift it a jot from what it damnably is for myself?

MAX. Can't you?

ANATOL. Haven't I tried? I've stared and stared at this ring of mine, saying Sleep... and then wake with this little wretch that's driving you mad, gone clean from your mind.

MAX. Still the same little wretch?

ANATOL. Of course. I'm damned wretched.

MAX. And still suspecting her?

ANATOL. Not a bit of it. I know perfectly well that she's untrue to me. She puts her arms round my neck and kisses me, and we're happy. But all the time... as sure as she's standing there... I know that she's...

MAX. Oh, nonsense.

ANATOL. Is it!

MAX. Then how do you know?

ANATOL. When I feel a thing as I feel this... it must be true.

MAX. That's unarguable, anyhow.

ANATOL. Besides, girls of this sort always are unfaithful. It comes naturally to them... it's a sort of instinct. Just as I have two or three books that I read at a time, they must keep two or three men hanging around.

MAX. But doesn't she love you?

ANATOL. What difference does that make?

MAX. Who's the other man?

ANATOL. How do I know? Some one has seen her in the shop. Some one has made eyes at her in the train going home.

MAX. Rubbish!

ANATOL. Why? All she wants is to have a good time without thinking about it. I ask her if she loves me. She says Yes... and it's perfectly true: Then... Am I the only man she loves? She says Yes again... and that's true, too, for the time being. For the time being she's forgotten the other fellow. Besides... what else can a woman say? She can't tell you.... No, my darling, the very moment your back is turned...! Still... I wish I knew for certain.

MAX. My dear Anatol, if she really loves you...

ANATOL. Oh, innocent! I ask you what has that to do with it?

MAX. A great deal, I should hope.

ANATOL. Then why am I not true to her? I really love her, don't I?

MAX. You're a man.

ANATOL. Thank you... it only needed that! Of course... we are men and women are different. Some! If their mammas lock them up or if they're little fishes. Otherwise, my dear Max, women and men are very much alike... especially women. And if I swear to one of them that she's the only woman I love, is that lying to her... just because the night before I've been saying the same thing to another?

MAX. Well... speak for yourself.

ANATOL. Cold-blooded, correct gentleman! I'm afraid dear Hilda's rather less like you than she is like me. Perhaps she isn't... but perhaps she is. I'd give a lot to know. I might go on my knees and swear I'd forgiven her already... but she'd lie to me just the same. Haven't I been begged with tears a dozen times... for God's sake to tell them if I'm true. They won't say an angry word if I'm not... only tell them. Then I've lied... calmly and cheerfully. And quite right too. Why should I make poor women wretched? They've believed in me and been happy.

MAX. Very well, then...

ANATOL. But I don't believe in her and I'm not happy. Oh... if some one could invent a way to make these dear damnable little creatures speak the truth!

MAX. What about your hypnotism?

ANATOL. My...?

MAX. Put her to sleep and draw it like a tooth.

ANATOL. I could.

MAX. What an opportunity.

ANATOL. Isn't it?

MAX. Does she love you... or who else is it? Where's she just been... where's she going? What's his name...?

ANATOL. Oh, if I knew that!

MAX. But you've only to ask her...

ANATOL. And she must answer.

MAX. You lucky fellow!

ANATOL. Yes... I am. It'll be my own fault if I worry any more, won't it? She's under my thumb now, isn't she?

MAX. I say... I'm curious to know.

ANATOL. Why... d'you think she's not straight?

MAX. Oh... may nobody think it but you?

ANATOL. No, nobody may. When you've just found your wife in another man's arms and an old friend meets you and says Poor fellow, I'm afraid Madame isn't all that she should be... d'you clasp his hand gratefully and tell him he's quite right? No... you knock him down.

MAX. Yes... the principal task of friendship is to foster one's friends' illusions.

ANATOL *hears something.*

ANATOL. Tsch!

MAX. What?

ANATOL. How well I know the sound of her!

MAX. I don't...

ANATOL. In the hall. Here she is. Well... Hilda?

He opens the door to find her coming in. A personable young woman.

HILDA. Dearest! Oh... somebody with you.

ANATOL. Only Max.

HILDA. How are you? All in the dark!

ANATOL. I like the gloaming.

HILDA. Romantic darling.

ANATOL. Dearest.

HILDA. But don't let's have any more of it. You don't mind, do you?

She turns up the lights and then takes of her hat and things, and makes herself quite at home.

ANATOL *[under his breath]*. Isn't she...? *[praise fails him]*.

MAX *[with a shade of irony]*. She is!

HILDA. Had a nice long talk?

ANATOL. Half-an-hour.

HILDA. What about?

ANATOL. All sorts of things.

MAX. Hypnotism.

HILDA. You're all going mad about that.

ANATOL. Yes...

HILDA. Anatol, why don't you hypnotise me some time?

ANATOL *is staggered at the sudden opportunity.*

ANATOL. D'you mean it?

HILDA. Rather! Awfully jolly if you'd do it, darling.

ANATOL. Much obliged.

HILDA. Not any strange person messing about of course.

ANATOL. Very well... I'll hypnotise you.

HILDA. When?

ANATOL. Now.

HILDA. Will you? Oh, how nice! What do I do?

ANATOL. Sit in that chair and go to sleep.

HILDA. That all?

He settles her on a chair, and, taking another, settles himself opposite. MAX *is discreet in the background.*

ANATOL. You must look at me... straight at me. And then I stroke your forehead... and then over your eyes... like this.

HILDA. What else?

ANATOL. Let yourself go.
She sits limply with her eyes shut.

HILDA. When you stroke me like that... it makes me feel funny all over.

ANATOL. Don't talk... go to sleep. You are rather sleepy.

HILDA. No, I'm not.

ANATOL. Just a little.

HILDA *[in tune with him].* Yes... just a little.

ANATOL. Oh... it's so hard to keep awake. Don't try. Why... you can't lift up your hand.

HILDA *[tonelessly].* No... I can't.

ANATOL *makes wider passes, and his voice is wonderfully soothing.*

ANATOL. You are so sleepy... so sleepy... so very sleepy. Well, then... sleep, dear child, sleep... sleep. You can't open your eyes now.
It seems as if she made the most helpless effort.

ANATOL. You can't... because you're asleep. Keep sleeping...

MAX *[really excited].* Is she...?

ANATOL. S-sh! *[Then as before.]* Sleeping... sleeping... fast asleep.

He stands silently for a minute looking down at HILDA *As she sleeps. Then he turns to* MAX *and says in his ordinary tones...*

ANATOL. All right now.

MAX. Is she really asleep?

ANATOL. Look at her. Let her be for a minute.

For a minute they both watch her. Then ANATOL *speaks again.*

ANATOL. Hilda, answer me when I ask you. What's your name?
Her mouth opens and the word is slowly formed.

HILDA. Hilda.

ANATOL. Hilda... we're walking along a road... out in the country.

HILDA. Yes... isn't it pretty? That's a tall tree. There's a bird singing...

ANATOL. Hilda... you're going to tell me the truth. Do you understand?

HILDA *[slowly again].* I am going to tell you the truth.

ANATOL. Answer me all I ask you quite truthfully... but when you wake up you will have forgotten. Do you understand?

HILDA. Yes.

ANATOL. Then sleep... soundly.

Then he turns to MAX *and they look at each other triumphantly, but hesitant.*

ANATOL. How shall we begin?

MAX *[after a moment]*. How old is she?

ANATOL. She's nineteen. Hilda... how old are you?

HILDA. Twenty-five.

MAX. Oh! *[and he dissolves into silent guffaws]*.

ANATOL. Tsch! That's odd. But... *[he brightens]* but there you are.

MAX. She never thought she'd be such a success.

ANATOL. Well... one more martyr to science. Let's try again. Hilda, do you love me? Hilda dear... do you love me?

HILDA. Yes.

ANATOL. There... that's the truth.

MAX. And now for the all-important question... is she true to you?

ANATOL *strikes the correct attitude for this.*

ANATOL. Yes. Hilda, are you...? *[but he frowns.]* No... that won't do.

MAX. Why not?

ANATOL. I can't put it that way.

MAX. It's a simple question.

ANATOL. Not at all. Are you true to me! It may mean anything.

MAX. How?

ANATOL. She might look back over her whole life. You don't suppose she never fell in love till she met me, do you?

MAX. Well... I should like to hear about it.

ANATOL. Would you, indeed! Prying into schoolgirl secrets! How was the poor child to know that one day she'd meet me?

MAX. Of course she didn't.

ANATOL. Very well, then.

MAX. So why shouldn't she tell us?

ANATOL. I don't like putting it that way, and I shan't.

MAX. What about... Hilda, since you've known me have you been true to me?

ANATOL. Ah, that's different. *[He faces the sleeper again.]* Hilda... since you've known me have you been... *[but again he frowns and stops]*. And it's rather worse.

MAX. Worse?

ANATOL. Think how all love affairs begin. We met quite casually. How could we tell we should one day be all in all to each other?

MAX. Of course you couldn't.

ANATOL. Very well, then. Suppose when she first knew me she had some idle fancy still to shake free of... am I to blame her for that?

MAX. You make better excuses than ever she could.

ANATOL. Is it fair to take such an advantage of the girl?

MAX *[with a twisty smile]*. You're a good fellow, Anatol. Try this. Hilda... since you've loved me, have you been true to me?

ANATOL. Yes... that's better.

MAX. Right.

Once more ANATOL *fixes his love with a gesture. But he suddenly drops it.*

ANATOL. No, it won't do... it won't do.

MAX. Well, really!

ANATOL. Think a minute. She's sitting in a train. A man opposite... good-looking fellow... slides his foot against hers. She looks up.

MAX. Well?

ANATOL. Think of the extraordinary subtlety of mind that has been engendered in her by this hypnotic trance. In her present unconscious state the remembrance of looking up not displeased might well be recalled as an act of infidelity.

MAX. Oh, come!

ANATOL. That's perfectly sound. And the more so because she already knows my views on such a point...

which are a little exaggerated. I've often warned her not to go looking at men.

MAX. What has she said to that?

ANATOL. Oh... asked me to imagine her doing such a thing!

MAX. Which you were imagining quite well ten minutes ago.

ANATOL. Suppose she was kissed under the mistletoe last Christmas...

MAX. No... really!

ANATOL. She may have been.

MAX. All this means is, that you won't ask her the question.

ANATOL. Not at all. I will ask her the question. But...

MAX. Anatol, it won't do. Ask a woman if she's true to you and she doesn't think of men treading on her foot or kissing her under the mistletoe. Besides, if the answer's not clear, we can make her go into details.

ANATOL. I see. You've made up your mind I shall ask her, have you?

MAX. Dash it, no! It's you want to find things out... not I.

ANATOL. Yes. There's another thing to think of.

MAX. What now?

ANATOL. What about her sub-responsible self?

MAX. What the devil's that?

ANATOL. Under the stimulus of certain extraordinary circumstances, I quite believe that one is not a fully independent agent.

MAX. Would you put that into English?

ANATOL. Well... imagine some room... softly curtained... dimly lit... glowing with warmth and colour.

MAX. Right... I've imagined it.

ANATOL. There she sits... she and some other man.

MAX. But what's she doing there at all?

ANATOL. That's not the point for the moment. She is there, we'll suppose. Supper... a glass of wine... cigarettes... silence. And then a whispered word or two...! Oh, my dear Max, colder women than she haven't stood prim against such temptation.

MAX. I should say that if you're in love with some one, you've no business to find yourself in a room like that with somebody else.

ANATOL. But I know how things will happen.

MAX. Anatol, it won't do. Here's your riddle with its answer ready. It's to be solved with a word. One question to find out if she's yours alone. One more to find out who shares her with you... and how big is the share. You won't ask them. You suffer agonies. What wouldn't you give to know... just to be sure. Well, here's the book open... and you won't even turn the page. Why? Because you might find written there that a woman you're in love with is no better than you swear all women are. You don't want the truth... you want to keep your illusions. Wake her up... and to-morrow be content with the glorious thought that you could have found out... only you wouldn't.

ANATOL. I... I...

MAX. You've been talking nonsense. It hasn't taken me in if it has you.

ANATOL. I will ask her.

MAX. Will you?

ANATOL. Yes... but not in front of you.

MAX. Why not?

ANATOL. If I'm to know the worst, I'll hear it. privately. Being hurt is only half as bad as being pitied for it. I don't want your kind face to be telling me just how hard the knock is. You'll know just the same, because if she's... if she has been... then we've seen the last of her. But you won't be there at the awful moment. D'you mind?

MAX. Shall I wait in your bedroom?

ANATOL. Yes. It won't take a moment.

So MAX *retires, and* ANATOL *faces the sleeping girl, who is half smiling in her sleep. He braces himself for the effort, then speaks sternly, judicially.*

ANATOL. Hilda... do you...?
He fails, then makes a further effort.

ANATOL. Hilda... are you...?

He fails again and turns distractedly away. Then for the third time...

ANATOL. Hilda... have you...?
He begins to sweat with the emotion of it.

ANATOL. Oh, Lord! Hilda... Hilda...

And then, with one qualm as to whether MAX *can overhear, he throws conscience to the winds, and himself on his knees beside the pretty girl.*

ANATOL. Oh... wake up, my darling, and give me a kiss.

With a couple of waves he can release her, and up she sits quite brightly.

HILDA. Have I been like that long? Where's Max?

ANATOL. Max!
Out of the bedroom comes MAX, *mischievously watchful.*

MAX. Here.

ANATOL. Yes... a sound sleep. You've been saying things.

HILDA. Anything I shouldn't?

MAX. He's been asking you questions.

HILDA. What sort?

ANATOL. All sorts.

HILDA. And I answered them?

ANATOL *[with a look at MAX]*. Every one.

HILDA. Oh, tell me...!

ANATOL. Aha!... we'll try again to-morrow.

HILDA. No, we won't. You asking me what you like... and now I can't remember any of it. I may have said the most awful things.

ANATOL. You said you loved me.

HILDA. Did I?

MAX. Who'd have thought it!

HILDA. I can say that better when I'm awake.

ANATOL. Sweetheart!

MAX. Good afternoon!

ANATOL. Going?

MAX. I must.

ANATOL. You can find your way out?

HILDA. Ta-ta.

MAX *beckons to* ANATOL, *who follows him to the door.*

MAX. Perhaps you've made a scientific discovery besides. That women tell lies just as well when they're asleep. But so long as you're happy... what's the odds?

He departs, leaving the couple locked in a fond embrace.

II. A CHRISTMAS PRESENT



It is Christmas Eve, about five o'clock. In a byestreet, that links up two others busy with shops, a builder's scaffold has formed a little arcade. Beneath this, and just beside a big arc lamp that sheds its whiteness down, ANATOL, *hurrying along with umbrella up, meets* GABRIELLE.

ANATOL *[stopping]*. Oh! How do you do?

GABRIELLE. Why, it's you!

ANATOL. What are you doing? All those parcels... and no umbrella!

GABRIELLE. I'm trying to find a cab.

ANATOL. But it's raining.

GABRIELLE. That's the reason. I've been buying presents.

ANATOL. Let me carry some of them... please.

GABRIELLE. It doesn't matter.

ANATOL. I insist. *[He captures one.]* But hadn't you better wait here in shelter? We shall find a cab just as quickly.

GABRIELLE. You really mustn't trouble.

ANATOL. Let me be a little attentive for once in a way.

GABRIELLE. I'll wait here a minute to see if one passes. Or I'll be grateful for the umbrella. *[He tries for another parcel.]* No, I can manage that, thanks. It's not at all heavy. *[But she surrenders it.]* Oh, very well then!

ANATOL. Won't you believe that I like being polite?

GABRIELLE. As one only notices it when it's raining, and I haven't an umbrella...

ANATOL. And it's Christmas Eve, and dark too...! Warm weather for Christmas, isn't it?

GABRIELLE. Very. *[They take their stand looking out for a cab to pass.]* Marvellous to see you at all.

ANATOL. I've not been to call once this year... is that what you mean?

GABRIELLE *[with much indifference]*. Oh, haven't you?

ANATOL. The fact is I've not been anywhere much. How is your husband... and how are the dear children?

GABRIELLE. Why ask that? You don't in the least want to know.

ANATOL. You read me like a book.

GABRIELLE. It's such very large print.

ANATOL. I wish you knew more of it... by heart.

GABRIELLE *[with a toss of her head]*. Don't say things like that.

ANATOL. They just spring from me.

GABRIELLE. Give me my parcels. I'll walk on.

ANATOL. Oh, don't be angry... I'll be as prim and proper as you please.

GABRIELLE. There's a cab. No, it's full. Oh, dear, shall I have to wait long? *[He is standing mum.]* Do say something.

ANATOL. I'm longing to... but the censorship is so strict.

GABRIELLE. You can tell me your news, can't you? It's ages since we met. What are you doing now?

ANATOL. As usual... nothing.

GABRIELLE. Nothing?

ANATOL. Rather less than nothing.

GABRIELLE. Isn't that a pity?

ANATOL. Why say that... when you don't in the least care?

GABRIELLE. You shouldn't take that for granted.

ANATOL. If I'm wasting my life, whose fault is it? Whose, would you mind telling me?

GABRIELLE. I'd better go on. Give me my parcels.

ANATOL *[mischievously]*. I didn't imply it was any one's fault in particular. I just wanted your valuable opinion.

GABRIELLE *[with a touch of feeling]*. You idler!

ANATOL. Don't despise idlers. They're the last word in civilisation. But I'm not idling to-night. I'm as busy as you are.

GABRIELLE. What with?

ANATOL. I'm out to buy Christmas presents, too.

GABRIELLE. Are you?

ANATOL. If I could find anything worth buying. I've been looking at the shops for weeks. They haven't a notion amongst 'em.

GABRIELLE. That's what the good customer has to supply. But, bless me! an idle person like you ought to be thinking out his presents all the summer.

ANATOL. How could I? How can I tell in the summer who I may be making up to at Christmas? And the shops will be shut in an hour or two, and I'm still empty-handed!

GABRIELLE. Could I help?

ANATOL. Oh, you are a darling! What's my best shop?

GABRIELLE. Well, you must know that. We'll take the cab there when we find it.

ANATOL. Thank you for passing the Darling... it's my favourite word.

GABRIELLE. I ignored it.

ANATOL. Very well... I'm prim and proper again.

GABRIELLE. Where shall we go when the cab comes? What sort of a present? Who's it for?

ANATOL. Now... how shall I tell you?

GABRIELLE. It's for a woman, of course.

ANATOL. Didn't I say you could read me like a book?

GABRIELLE. What sort of a woman?

ANATOL. There, again! How do you women sort yourselves out?

GABRIELLE. Is it a woman I know?

ANATOL. Not at all.

GABRIELLE. Not... a woman I should call on?

ANATOL. Never.

GABRIELLE. No... I thought as much.

ANATOL. Don't sneer.

GABRIELLE. You have extraordinary tastes. What's she like... pretty-pretty?

ANATOL. Pretty.

GABRIELLE. A man is a marvellous creature. Good breeding, good manners, are nothing to you!

ANATOL. Oh, a great deal... when they'll condescend to us. But if they won't...

GABRIELLE. Don't be silly again. No, you prefer a cheap and easy conquest!

ANATOL. I go where I'm appreciated.

GABRIELLE. Can she read you like a book?

ANATOL. God forbid! But she admires the binding, and takes the rest on trust. While you despise the contents... as if you really knew them!

GABRIELLE. I really don't know what you mean. I can tell you of an excellent shop; I passed it just now. Cases of scent in the window. One with three sorts... Patchouli, Jockey Club, Cherry Blossom. I'm sure that's the very thing.

ANATOL. You're unkind.

GABRIELLE. Well, there was another shop next door... With brooches and suchlike. One with six Parisian diamonds in it... six. Oh, so sparkling! Or a bracelet with charms hung round; or a long bead necklace... quite savage! That's the sort of thing these ladies like, isn't it?

ANATOL. I'm afraid you know nothing about them.

GABRIELLE. Or I can tell you of a hat shop with a style of its own. Their bows are too large, and they put in a feather too many. These persons like to be conspicuous, don't they?

ANATOL. Not at all.

GABRIELLE. It's hard to be helpful. Make a suggestion yourself.

ANATOL. You're waiting to laugh at it.

GABRIELLE. I promise I won't. Let me know what she likes. Is she demure in sealskins?

ANATOL. I said you'd laugh.

GABRIELLE. I'm not laughing. Tell me about her.

ANATOL. I don't think I can.

GABRIELLE. Of course you can. How long have you known her?

ANATOL. Oh...

GABRIELLE. Well?

ANATOL. Ever so long.

GABRIELLE. Don't be so difficult. Tell me all about it.

ANATOL. There's nothing to tell.

GABRIELLE. What nonsense! Where did you meet her and what's she like? What's her name and her age? Is she tall or short and dark or fair?

ANATOL. It'll only bore you.

GABRIELLE. No it won't. I've always wanted to know about that sort of person... what they're really like.

ANATOL. You'll never know.

GABRIELLE. Why not?

ANATOL. As long as you fully believe that women you can't call on don't really exist at all.

GABRIELLE. But I want to learn better. And if no one dares tell me the truth...

ANATOL *[with a sudden break of tone]*. Haven't you very virtuous ladies a feeling that this other sort of woman... somehow gets the better of you after all

GABRIELLE. That's a delicate insult.

ANATOL. You wouldn't change places, of course, but... how dare she be so improperly happy?

GABRIELLE. Is it the only way then?

ANATOL. That's feminine fellow-feeling, I'm told... and therefore all that's charming and charitable.

GABRIELLE. You've learnt to be very sarcastic since we last met.

ANATOL *[seriously, almost passionately]*. Shall I tell you bow? Once I used to believe that a good woman so-called was an honest woman. I've taken a few knock-down blows with my teeth shut...

GABRIELLE. Please don't be heroic... that's far worse!

ANATOL. Straight blows. I can take a No when it's honestly meant and said without flinching. But when the eyes say Perhaps and the smile says Wait a little, and what the No means is Yes Yes Yes... if only I dared! Then...

GABRIELLE *[biting her lips]*. I think I won't wait for this cab to come by...

ANATOL. Then you've your choice between feeling a fool and becoming a cynic.

GABRIELLE.... Unless you mean to go on telling me about... about your new friend.

ANATOL *[back to his bantering humour]*. You simply must know, must you?

GABRIELLE. Certainly I must. How did you first meet?

ANATOL. How does one meet people? In the streets, at the seaside, in an omnibus, sharing au umbrella!

GABRIELLE. Never mind how one meets people. How did you meet her... the Her we're finding a Christmas present for? I'm sure she's like nobody else.

ANATOL. She's just as like every other girl of her sort as you are like every other woman of yours.

GABRIELLE *[for the first time really annoyed]*. Am I indeed!

ANATOL. Oh, don't be offended. Or as I'm like every other man of mine. Are there a dozen different patterns of any of us altogether?

GABRIELLE. What's yours?

ANATOL. I, madam, am a Toy Philosopher.

GABRIELLE. And mine?

ANATOL. You are a Married Lady.

GABRIELLE. And what's she?

ANATOL. She? She is just a Dear Little Girl.

GABRIELLE. Then let's hear all about your Dear Little Girl.

ANATOL. It's not that she's so pretty, or so smart... and certainly not that she's so clever.

GABRIELLE. Never mind what she's not.

ANATOL. She's as sweet as a wild flower, and as elusive as a fairy tale... and she knows what love means.

GABRIELLE. No doubt. These Dear Little Girl have every chance to learn.

ANATOL. Quite so, but you'll never learn what she's really like. For when you were a dear little girl... of another sort... you knew nothing at all. And now you're a married lady you think you're so worldly wise.

GABRIELLE. Not at all. I'm quite open-mouthed for your fairy tale. What sort of a castle does the princess live in?

ANATOL. Can you imagine a fairy princess in anything but the smartest of drawing-rooms?

GABRIELLE *[a little tartly]*. Thank you, I can.

ANATOL. Because this one lives in a little room... with a cheap and nasty wall-paper. With a few Christmas numbers hanging about and a white shaded lamp on her table. You can see the sun set from the window over the roofs and through the chimneys. And in the spring you can almost smell the flowers in a garden across the way.

GABRIELLE. It must be a sign of great happiness... looking forward to the spring.

ANATOL. Yes, even I feel happy now and then... sitting with her at that window.

GABRIELLE *gives a little shiver; it's the cold, no doubt. Then...*

GABRIELLE. It is getting late. Shall we walk on? You must buy her something. Something to hang on the nasty wall-paper and hide it a little.

ANATOL. She thinks it so pretty.

GABRIELLE. Why don't you refurnish the room to your taste?

ANATOL. Why should I?

GABRIELLE. With a Persian carpet, and...

ANATOL. No, no, no... She knows what she likes.

There falls a little silence. But no cab passes.

GABRIELLE. Is she waiting for you now?

ANATOL. Sure to be.

GABRIELLE. What will she say when you come?

ANATOL. Oh... the right thing.

GABRIELLE. She knows your step on the stairs, doesn't she?

ANATOL. I expect so.

GABRIELLE. And goes to the door?

ANATOL. Yes.

GABRIELLE. And puts her arms round your neck, and says... What does she say?

ANATOL. The right thing.

GABRIELLE. What's that?

ANATOL. It's just... the right thing to say.

GABRIELLE. What was it yesterday?

ANATOL. It sounds nothing repeated. I suppose it's the way that she says it.

GABRIELLE. I'll imagine that. Tell me the words.

ANATOL. It is good to have you back again.

GABRIELLE. It is good... what?

ANATOL. To have you back again.

GABRIELLE. That's very beautiful.

ANATOL. You see... she means it.

GABRIELLE. And she lives there alone? You can always be with her?

ANATOL. She's quite alone. She has no father or mother.

GABRIELLE. And you... are all the world to her?

ANATOL *[the cynic in him shrugs his shoulders]*. I hope so. For the moment.
There is another silence.

GABRIELLE. I'm afraid I'm getting cold standing still... and all the cabs seem to be full.

ANATOL. I'm so sorry. I shouldn't have kept you. Let me see you home.

GABRIELLE. Yes... they'll all be fidgeting. But what about your present?

ANATOL. Never mind, I shall find something.

GABRIELLE. Will you? But I wanted to help you buy it.

ANATOL. No, no, you mustn't trouble.

GABRIELLE. I wish I could be there when you give it her. I wish I could see that little room and that... lucky little girl. There's a cab empty. Call it, please.

ANATOL *waves to the cab.*

ANATOL. Taxi!

GABRIELLE. Thank you. *[As the cab turns and she moves towards it...]* May I send her something?

ANATOL. You?

GABRIELLE. Take her these flowers. Will you give her a message as well?

ANATOL. It's really most awfully good of you.

GABRIELLE. But you will take them her, and promise to give her the message?

ANATOL. Certainly.

GABRIELLE. Promise.

ANATOL *[by this he has opened the cab door]*. I promise. Why shouldn't I?

GABRIELLE. This is it.

ANATOL. Yes?

GABRIELLE. These flowers, dear little girl, are from... some one who might have been as happy as you... if she hadn’t been quite such a coward! *[She gets in without his help]*. Tell him where to drive.
He does so, and then goes his way too.

III. AN EPISODE



MAX'S *ROOMS ARE comfortable, if commonplace. The writing table he is sitting at is clumsy, but it's within reach of a cheerful fire. By the lamp on it he is reading a letter.*

MAX. We're back again for three months... you'll have seen it in the papers. Old friends first... I'm coming along... Your affectionate Bibi. Nice little Bianca! I shall certainly stay in.
There's a knock at the door.

MAX. Already! No, this can't be... Come in.

In walks ANATOL, *carrying an enormous parcel. He looks most gloomy.*

ANATOL. How are you?

MAX. What on earth have you got there,

ANATOL. This is my past.

MAX. Your what?

ANATOL *deposits the parcel on the table.*

ANATOL. I have brought you my dead and buried past. I want you to take care of it for me.

MAX. Why?

ANATOL *[with great solemnity]*. May I sit down?

MAX *[as solemn as he]*. You may.

ANATOL *takes off his hat and coat and settles himself in the most comfortable chair.*

ANATOL. May I smoke?

MAX. Try one of these.

ANATOL *lights a cigar and unbends a trifle.*

ANATOL. I rather like these.

MAX *[pointing to the parcel]*. Well?

ANATOL. I really cannot live with my past any longer. I'm going for a holiday.

MAX. Ah!

ANATOL. I wish to begin a new life... even if I don't go on with it. And this is naturally very much in the

way.

MAX. In love again?

ANATOL. Out of love this time. So you might look after this rubbish for me.

MAX. Better burn it if it's rubbish.

ANATOL. I can't do that.

MAX. Why not?

ANATOL. This is how I'm true to them... to all the women I've ever loved... I never forget a single one. I have only to turn over these letters, and dead flowers, and locks of hair... You'll have to let me come here and turn them over occasionally... and back they come to me... I'm in love with them all again.

MAX. This is to be a sort of Usual place at half-past three and don't be late... is it?

ANATOL. I've often wished there really were some Abracadabra which would call them back out of the utter nothingness.

MAX. But a variegated sort of nothingness.

ANATOL. If I knew of a word...

MAX. Let's think of one. What about... My Only Love.

ANATOL. Yes... My Only Love! And then they'd all come. One from a little suburban villa... one from her crowded drawing-room... one from her dressing-room at the theatre...

MAX. Several from their dressing-rooms at the theatre.

ANATOL. Several. One from a shop...

MAX. One from the arms of your successor!

ANATOL. One from the grave. One from here... one from there. Here they all are!

MAX. Would you mind not speaking the word? I somehow don't think they'd be pleasant company. I dare say they're not in love with you still... but I'm pretty sure they're still jealous of each other.

ANATOL. Wise man! Let the phantoms rest.

MAX. And where am I to put this mausoleum?

ANATOL. I'd better undo it.

He undoes it. The parcel is made up of a dozen or so other little parcels, neatly tied up and ticketed. MAX *gazes with delight.*

MAX. Hullo!

ANATOL. Yes... I'm a methodical man.

MAX. Is it done alphabetically?

ANATOL. No, there's a label for each... like the motto in a cracker. A verse or a phrase will recall the whole affair to me. No names! Susan and Jane suggest nothing.

MAX. May I look?

ANATOL. I wonder if I can still fix them all. I can't have looked at some of them for years.

ANATOL *leans back in his chair, smoking.* MAX *settles himself enjoyably to the Past. He takes up the first packet and reads the motto.*

MAX.
"I loved her. When she left me I thought

I should have killed her;
My kisses on your neck remain, and nothing
else, Matilda."
But that's a name... what a name! Matilda!

ANATOL. It wasn't her real name, but I'd written "killed her," and there aren't many rhymes to that. I always did kiss her on the neck, though.

MAX. Who was she?

ANATOL. It doesn't matter. I held her in my arms once. That's all there is to her.

MAX *[as he puts the packet aside].* Stand down, Matilda. She does up small, anyhow.

ANATOL. One lock of hair.

MAX. No letters?

ANATOL. Letters from Matilda! That would have inked her fingers. Don't you sometimes wish women weren't taught to write? Exit Matilda.

MAX *reads another label.*

MAX. "Women are alike in one thing... they turn impudent if you catch them out in a lie."

ANATOL. They do.

MAX. Who was it? She's very heavy.

ANATOL. Lies eight pages long. Oh... put it away.

MAX. Was she so very impudent?

ANATOL. When I found her out. Throw her away.

MAX. Impudent little liar!

ANATOL. No... you mustn't insult her. I have held her in my arms. She is sacred.

MAX. How stupid of me! Who's next? *[A third packet.]*
"When sad, my child, and sick of earth.
My thoughts to your Young Man fly far,
And then I laugh for all I'm worth;
Oh, dear, how funny some things are!"

ANATOL. So they were!

MAX. What's inside?

ANATOL. A photograph. She and the Young Man.

MAX. Did you know him too?

ANATOL. That's what was so funny. He really was quite an exceptional fool.

MAX. Hush! She has held him in her arms... he is sacred.

ANATOL. You shut up.

MAX. Stand down, my child, with your exceptionally foolish and mirth-provoking young man. *[With a fourth package.]* What's this?

ANATOL. What?

MAX. "A box on the ears."

ANATOL. Oh...! Oh, yes... yes... yes!

MAX. Was that how it ended?

ANATOL. No, how it began.

MAX. Ah! *[A fifth label.]* "How hard it is to grow a flower, but it's so easy to pick it." What does that mean?

ANATOL. Some other fellow grew the flower... I came along and picked it.

MAX. Oh! *[A sixth label.]* "She always carried her curling tongs."

ANATOL. Do you know she always did. Then it didn't matter what happened. I tell you... she was damn pretty. There's a bit of her veil left, isn't there?

MAX. It feels like that. *[A seventh label.]* “How did I lose you?” How did you lose her?

ANATOL. That’s the point... I never knew. One fine day she just wasn’t. Don’t you know how you leave your umbrella somewhere... don’t think of it till days later... no idea where you put it down.

MAX. Fare thee well, my lost umbrella! *[An eighth label.]* What’s this one? “Sweet and dear you were to me...”

ANATOL *[catching him up]*. “Girl with roughened finger tips. Past all...”

MAX. Oh... that was Hilda.

ANATOL. You remember Hilda?

MAX. What became of her?

ANATOL. She married a milkman.

MAX. Did she now?

ANATOL. That’s what happens. I love a girl... I’m all the world to her... and then she marries a milkman. A dear child. I hope it’s been good for trade.

MAX *[as he puts HILDA aside]*. Milko! *[Then the ninth package.]* And what’s “Episode”? Nothing inside but a little dust.

ANATOL *leans across and takes the little envelope from him.*

ANATOL. Dust! It was once a rosebud.

MAX. What does “Episode” mean?

ANATOL. That’s what it was... an episode... a couple of hours’ romance. Pathetic, isn’t it? Nothing left of its sweetness but dust!

MAX. Most pathetic. But one might call them all a little episodic.

ANATOL. Not with such dreadful truth. Of course, they all were... and I knew they were at the time. I had a fine idea of myself in those days. I used to catch myself thinking... Poor child, poor child!

MAX. Poor...?

ANATOL. When I was very young indeed I saw myself as one of the world’s great heroes of romance. These women, I thought... I pluck them, crush the sweetness from them... it’s the law of nature... then I throw them aside as I pass on. I know row that I’m more of a fool than a hero... and I’m getting most unpleasantly used to knowing it.

MAX. What was “Episode”?

ANATOL. I caught her... then I threw her aside... crushed her under my heel.

MAX. Did you really?

ANATOL. But I tell you... they were the few most wonderful moments I ever passed. Not that you'd ever understand.

MAX. Why not?

ANATOL. Because it sounds nothing at all... unless you can feel it as I felt it.

MAX. I'll try.

ANATOL. I sat at the piano in that room of mine one evening. We'd been in love with each other just two hours. D'you remember a lamp I had and the curious glowing light it gave. Think of that lamp... it's most important.

MAX. I've thought of it.

ANATOL. I sat at the piano. She sat at my feet... I remember I couldn't reach the pedals. Her head in my lap... her hair loose... and the glowing light making such shadows in it! I let one hand wander on the keys... the other was pressed against her lips.

MAX. What else?

ANATOL. Isn't that like you? Nothing else! We'd loved each other for only an hour or two. It was our first solitude... it was to be our last. She said it would be. But I knew that she loved me madly... the very air was shimmering with it. Would you have noticed that? Do you wonder I felt a demi-god and only thought... Oh, you poor, poor child! What was it to me? An episode. I should hardly cease to feel her kisses on my hand before she'd begin to slip into the shadows of memory. But she'd never forget... never be able to forget. Some women can... but not she. She lay thereat my feet pouring out her soul in love. I knew that I was the whole world to her... and always would be... one is so certain of these things sometimes. While to me... she and her love were just an episode.

MAX. Who was the lady?

ANATOL. You knew her... we met her at supper once.

MAX. Did we? Sounds too romantic a person for any supper I ever went to.

ANATOL. Not a bit. You'll laugh when I tell you. She belonged to a...

MAX. Theatre?

ANATOL. No... a circus.

MAX. Not Bianca?

ANATOL. Yes... Bianca. I never told you I met her again after that night.

MAX. D'you mean to say that Bibi was in love with you?

ANATOL. She was. I met her in the street... it seems they went off to Russia the next morning.

MAX. And a good job for your romance they did.

ANATOL. Of course! Because it's somebody you knew the whole thing becomes commonplace. Oh, Max... why don't you learn how to be in love?

MAX. Teach me.

ANATOL. Learn to tune yourself up to the supreme moments.

MAX. With a little piano-playing and a glowing light upon her shimmering hair?

ANATOL. Well... that's how I get wonders out of life. You saw no more in that girl than you could in that lamp of mine. A bit of glass, wasn't it... with a light behind? What a way to walk through the world... eyes open and imagination shut! Do you wonder you find nothing in it? You swallow life whole, Max... I taste it.

MAX. You've only to fall in love to make the universe all you want it to be!

ANATOL. That's how it's done.

MAX. How many glowing lamps would it take to work Bianca up to that pitch?

ANATOL. I know what she felt when I kissed her.

MAX. I know better.

ANATOL. Do you?

MAX. Because I've never kissed her... and never needed to imagine her anything but the pretty, harmless, worthless little baggage she is.

ANATOL. Oh!

MAX. Whatever else you want to find in her you must put there first.

ANATOL. It wasn't so then... it wasn't. Oh... I know all about the girl. She'd kissed men before, and she has kissed them since.

MAX. With just the same kisses that she kissed you.

ANATOL. No. I wish I hadn't told you.

MAX. Never mind. You felt all you felt and all she ought to have felt as well.

ANATOL. Have you ever seen much of her?

MAX. Quite a lot.

ANATOL. Have you?

MAX. Don’t distress yourself. She’s a witty little devil, and we always liked a chat.

ANATOL. A friendly chat?

MAX. Not a bit more.

ANATOL. Then I swear to you, Max... that girl loved me to distraction.

MAX. Quite so. Let’s get on with the others *[he takes a tenth packet]*. “Could I but tell the meaning of your smile, you green-eyed”...

ANATOL. I say... d’you know that circus is back again?

MAX. Yes... she’s still with it.

ANATOL. Sure?

MAX. Quite. I shall see her this evening... she’s coming to call.

ANATOL. Well! Why on earth didn’t you tell me that before?

MAX. What’s it to do with you? Your past is dead... look at it.

ANATOL. But...

MAX. Besides... yesterday’s romance warmed up. Don’t risk that.

ANATOL. I wonder if I could feel the same for her again.

MAX. There are other dangers. You take great care of this Episode of yours. Don’t let it catch cold.

ANATOL. But I mustn’t miss a chance of seeing her.

MAX. She’s wiser than you! Has she ever sent you even a postcard? But perhaps she forgot all about you.

ANATOL. Max... why not believe me when I tell you...?

MAX. Well?

ANATOL. That hour we spent together was one of those things that never fade.
There’s a knock at the door of the flat.

MAX. Here she is!

ANATOL. What!

MAX. You go into my bedroom and then slip out.

ANATOL. Certainly not.

MAX. You'd much better.

ANATOL. I shall not.

MAX. Stand there then, where she won't see you at once.

ANATOL. But why...?

Still, he stands in the shadow, and MAX *goes to the door to welcome* BIANCA. *She is as he described her.*

BIANCA. Max! How are you? I'm back.

MAX. How are you, Bibi? Nice of you to come.

BIANCA. First visit.

MAX. Honoured.

BIANCA. How's everybody? Suppers at Sacher's again now?

MAX. But you must turn up. Sometimes you didn't.

BIANCA. I did.

MAX. Not when you'd something better to do.

BIANCA. But you weren't jealous. I wish they'd all take lessons from you. Why can't a man be fond of one without making himself a nuisance? Oh... who's that? Making one jump!

She has discovered ANATOL, *who comes forward, silent, expectant. She stares at him.*

MAX. An old friend, Bibi.

BIANCA. Oh...

MAX. Quite a surprise.

ANATOL *comes nearer.* BIANCA *is desperately puzzled. She doesn't recall him in the least. She is most polite.*

BIANCA. Of course... we've met...

ANATOL. Bianca.

BIANCA. Yes... to be sure.

ANATOL *seizes her hand quite passionately.*

ANATOL. Bianca.

BIANCA. But... I'm so stupid... where was it?

MAX. Try hard to remember.

BIANCA. Of course... in Petersburg.

ANATOL. No... it wasn't in Petersburg.

With that he drops her hand, takes his hat and coat and goes.

BIANCA. Oh...
The flat door slams.

MAX. He's gone.

BIANCA. But... I'm so sorry... what's wrong...?

MAX. Don't you really remember him?

BIANCA. Yes... quite well. But I can't place him for the life of me.

MAX. Anatol, Bibi... Anatol.

BIANCA *[her brow wrinkling in puzzlement]*. Anatol... Anatol?

MAX. Anatol... at the piano... and a lamp casting shadows on your shimmering hair. Here... not in Petersburg... three years ago.

A light breaks on BIANCA.

BIANCA. Well... of course... Anatol! How stupid of me. Oh, do call him back. Anatol!
She makes for the door.

MAX. No... he's gone.
She looks from the window.

BIANCA. There he goes.

MAX *[behind her]*. Yes... there he goes.

BIANCA *[calling]*. Anatol!

MAX. No use... he can't hear.

BIANCA. You will apologise to him, won't you? I've hurt his feelings. Such a nice fellow.

MAX. You're quite sure you remember him?

BIANCA. Why, yes! But, you know, there is some one in Petersburg as like him as two peas.

MAX. I'll tell him so.

BIANCA. Besides... when you haven't given a man a thought for three years... and there he suddenly is plumped in front of you! One can't remember everybody.

MAX *[grimly smiling]*. Let's shut the window... it's gone chilly.

BIANCA. I shall run against him somehow.

MAX. No doubt *[he picks up and holds out to her the little envelope marked "Episode"]*. D'you know what this is?

BIANCA. What?

MAX. The rosebud you were wearing that evening... the evening, Bibi...

BIANCA. Has he kept it?

MAX. As you see.

BIANCA. D'you mean he was in love with me?

MAX. Passionately... unfathomably... and for ever and a day. But so he was with all these others.

BIANCA *surveys the table full.*

BIANCA. All that lot!

MAX. We've been sorting you out.

BIANCA. Sorting us...?

MAX. Sorting you.

BIANCA. Oh, indeed! Where do I go?

MAX. Here.
He gravely drops "Episode" in the fire.

BIANCA. Well!

MAX. All the revenge I can give him you see. But don't be cross... I want to hear your news.

BIANCA. I don't think I feel like it now.

MAX. Bibi... don't quarrel with me. Let's hear about the fellow in Petersburg, who's as like him as two peas.

BIANCA. Don't be absurd.

MAX. Or anything else you like. I'll tell you how to begin.

He settles her in a big armchair, and settles himself in another beside her.

MAX. Once upon a time there was a big, big city...

BIANCA.... And into the city came a big, big circus...

MAX.... And in the circus there was a tiny, tiny girl...

BIANCA.... Who jumped through a big, big hoop.

MAX. Now we're getting on. And in a box every evening...

BIANCA. Yes... in a box every evening there sat a very good-looking man...

MAX. Quite so... and then?
They settle to their friendly chat.

IV. KEEPSAKES



EMILY'S *SITTING-ROOM IS quite prettily furnished, and looks over some gardens, where the trees are just now breaking into leaf. It is late in the afternoon. Alone in the room and at the writing-desk sits* ANATOL. *He is feverishly searching the drawers.* EMILY *comes in and finds him.*

EMILY. What are you doing at my desk... rummaging about? Anatol!
He hardly looks up even.

ANATOL. I have a perfect right to. And it's as well I did.

EMILY. What have you found... except your own letters?

ANATOL. My letters! What do you call these?

Two tiny objects which he had placed safely on the top of the desk. He shows them to her in his outstretched palm.

EMILY. What?

ANATOL. These two stones. This one's a ruby... and this other dark one. I've never seen them before. I didn't give them you.

EMILY *turns away, and for a moment doesn't answer. When she does it is very quietly.*

EMILY. No... I had quite forgotten them.

ANATOL *[still brutally, sneeringly angry].* Had you! They were hidden away safe enough in the bottom of that drawer. Come on... you'd better confess. Don't lie. Oh, all you women do! Won't you? Don't pretend to be indignant. Yes, of course... sulk when you're found out. I want to know what else there is. Where have you hidden your other treasures?
He returns to his ransacking.

EMILY. I haven't any others.

ANATOL. Haven't you!

EMILY *[quite passive].* You needn't look. I swear I haven't.

ANATOL. Well then... what about these?

EMILY. I suppose I was wrong. I shouldn't have...
He leaves the desk and faces her.

ANATOL. You suppose! Now Emily... to-morrow we were to be married. I thought we'd got rid of the past... utterly. Didn't I bring you everything I had that could remind me of mine... letters, keepsakes, everything...

and didn't we burn them? And your rings and bracelets and earrings! Haven't we got rid of them too... all of them? Given them away... thrown them into the river... out of the window... anywhere? And you swore to me that you had done with it all... wiped everything out! You said that now you knew you'd never really been in love with any one before. And I believed you! I suppose we always do believe women when the lies are pleasant ones... from their first lie to their last... because we want to.

EMILY. Shall I swear it again?

ANATOL. What's the good? I've done with you... done with you. Oh, you were very clever about it! To see you standing there in front of the fire watching those letters and things burn... poking them down so that nothing should escape... wouldn't one have thought you were only thankful to be rid of every speck of your past? You sobbed in my arms that day by the river when we threw that bracelet into the water! Tears of repentance? All a sham! Now I'll tell you... I didn't trust you in spite of them. I came here to find out for myself... and I have found out. *[She is sitting silent, her head away.]* Say something. Defend yourself.

EMILY. No... you've made up your mind to have done with me.

ANATOL. But I want to know about these two things. Why keep just these two?

EMILY. You don't love me any more.

ANATOL. Emily... I want to know the truth.

EMILY. What's the good if you don't love me any more?

ANATOL. Tell me the truth. Perhaps...

EMILY. Well?

ANATOL. Perhaps you can make things seem a bit better. I don't want to think badly of you, Emily.
She turns a little towards him.

EMILY. D'you forgive me?

ANATOL. Tell me the truth.

EMILY. If I do... will you forgive me?

He doesn't answer for a moment. Then his voice half hardens again.

ANATOL. This ruby! What about it... why have you kept it?

EMILY. Will you be patient?

ANATOL. Yes... yes. Go on.

After a moment she does; speaking quite tonelessly, her head bent.

EMILY. It came out of a locket. It fell out.

ANATOL. Who gave you the locket?

EMILY. Oh... that wasn't it. It was because of... the day I was wearing it.

ANATOL. But who gave it you?

EMILY. What does it matter? My mother, I think. Oh, Anatol... if I were the bad lot you think me, I could easily say I kept the stone because my mother gave it me. You'd believe that. I kept it because I didn't want ever to forget that day I nearly lost it.

ANATOL. Go on.

EMILY. I am so glad to be telling you. But listen now. You'd laugh at my being jealous of the first woman you were ever in love with, wouldn't you?

ANATOL. What's that to do with it?

EMILY. But I dare say you're still in love with the memory of her. It's the sort of old unhappiness one never wants quite to lose, isn't it? The day I dropped that ruby means a lot to me, because it was the day I had my first glimpse of... everything that you and I can mean to each other now, if we will. Oh... if I'd never had to learn how to love... d'you think I could love you as I do? Anatol... it we'd met then... before we knew what love meant... should we have given each other a thought? Don't shake your head. You once said that to me yourself.

ANATOL. I did.

EMILY. You told me not to be so sorry that things were... as they were... because if we hadn't both learnt by experience, we could never love each other as we do.

ANATOL *[bitterly]*. Yes... that's all the consolation one has in loving a woman who... *[he swallows the insult]* oh, never mind!

EMILY *[with dignity]*. I'm telling you the truth about this. I kept it to remind me of the day that...

ANATOL. Say the words!

EMILY. You like to humiliate me. It was the very first time that... I was just a silly girl. What was I... sixteen?

ANATOL. He was twenty... and tall and dark... I'm sure.

EMILY *[quite simply]*. D'you know I don't remember, dear. I remember the wood we were in, and the wind shaking the trees. It was in the spring. Yes... and the sun shone through the branches and made the primroses look so bright.

ANATOL *paces the room with a sudden access of fury.*

ANATOL. And you were stolen from me before I ever knew you! Don't you hate him... the very thought of

him?

EMILY. Perhaps he gave me to you, Anatol. *[That brings him to a stand.]* No... whatever happens I don't hate the thought of him... I won't pretend I ever did. Don't you know I love you as I have never loved any one? And no one has ever loved you as I love you. But in spite of that... and even though when you kissed me first you made me forget every one else... all I'd ever gone through... Wiped it out utterly... you can't make me forget, and you can't make me regret the moments that made me a woman.

ANATOL. You love me, do you?

EMILY. I hardly remember what he looked like... or anything he said.

ANATOL. Only that he kissed you... held you close to him... turned your ignorance into knowledge and your innocence into guilt. And you're grateful for that... grateful! Good God... can't you see what this means to me... stirring up again all this horrible past when I'd almost forgotten that there ever was or could be any other man in the world for you but me.

She looks at him and then speaks with a certain cold sadness.

EMILY. Yes... you don't understand. I think you were right. We'd better part.

ANATOL *[not quite prepared for this]*. What else d'you expect of me?

EMILY *[emotional for the first time]*. I envy a woman who can lie. It's a costly business telling the truth. But there's one thing I'd like to know. Why you have always begged me to be quite straight with you. How many times have you said that there was nothing you couldn't forgive me except a lie. So I confessed everything to you... and never cared how bad I made myself out. I told you that the only good thing about me was my love for you. Any other woman would have made excuses... I didn't. I let you know that I was vain and wanton... that I'd wasted and sold myself... that I wasn't worth your loving. I told you that before I'd let you come near me. I hid away from you, didn't I? It was just because I loved you so. You found me and you cried for me. But I still said No. I didn't want to drag you down... although your love meant more to me than anything else had ever meant in the world. I've never loved any one but you. In spite of everything you took me. I was so glad and so afraid! But why have you given me back bit by bit all the beauty and self-respect that the others had robbed me of... why have you made me innocent again by being great enough to be able to forgive... if now...?

ANATOL *[echoing her as she pauses]*. Now?

EMILY. If now you're done with me only because I am just like all the others?

ANATOL. No, no, dear... you're not, you're not.

EMILY. What do you want me to do then? Shall I throw it away?
She fingers the little ruby disdainfully.

ANATOL *[passionately self-reproachful]*. What is there great about me? I'm worse than human. Yes... throw it away. You dropped it, did you, among the primroses... and it glittered in the sun...

They sit there silently; the poor little trinket on the table between them. Then he rouses.

ANATOL. It's dark... let's go out.

EMILY. It'll be so cold.

ANATOL. No... you can feel. the Spring's in the air.

EMILY. Very well, darling.

She moves, and as he moves too his eye lights on the other stone he had found.

ANATOL. But what about this one?

EMILY. That?

ANATOL. Yes, the black stone... what about that?
She takes it up with care.

EMILY. Don't you know what it is?

ANATOL. It looks like a...

EMILY. It's a black diamond!
Her eyes glitter as she holds it.

ANATOL. What?

EMILY. They're very scarce.

ANATOL *[hardly articulate]*. Why... have you kept it?

EMILY. It's worth a hundred pounds!

ANATOL. Ah!

He snatches the stone from her and throws it into the fire. She shrieks out savagely...

EMILY. What are you doing?

Then throws herself on her knees and snatching up the tongs does her best to rescue it. He watches her grimly for a little; the firelight makes ugly shadows on her face. Then he says quietly...

ANATOL. That was your price, was it?
And he leaves her.

V. A FAREWELL SUPPER



IN A PRIVATE room at Sacher's restaurant one evening, about supper-time, we find ANATOL *and* MAX. MAX *is comfortable upon a sofa with a cigarette.* ANATOL *stands by the door discussing the menu with the waiter.*

MAX. Haven't you done?

ANATOL. Just. Don't forget now.

This to the waiter, who disappears. ANATOL *begins to pace the room, nervously.*

MAX. Suppose she don't turn up after all.

ANATOL. It's only ten. She couldn't be here yet.

MAX. The ballet must be over long ago.

ANATOL. Give her time to take her paint off and dress. Shall I go over and wait for her?

MAX. Don't spoil the girl.

ANATOL *[mirthlessly laughing]*. Spoil her... spoil her!

MAX. I know... you behave like a brute to her. Well... that's one way of spoiling a woman.

ANATOL. No doubt. *[Then, suddenly stopping before his friend.]* But, my dear Max... when I tell you... oh, Lord!

MAX. Well?

ANATOL.... What a critical evening this is!

MAX. Critical! Have you asked her to marry you?

ANATOL. Worse than that.

MAX *[sitting up very straight]*. You've married her? Well!

ANATOL. What a Philistine you are. When will you learn that there are spiritual crises besides which such commonplace matters as...

MAX *[subsiding again]*. We know! If you've only got one of those on I wouldn't worry her with it.

ANATOL *[grimly]*. Wouldn't you? What makes this evening critical, my friend, is that it's to be the last.

MAX *[sitting up again]*. What?

ANATOL. Yes... our farewell supper.

MAX. What am I doing at it?

ANATOL. You are to be the undertaker... to our dead love.

MAX. Thank you! I shall have a pleasant evening.

ANATOL. All the week I've been putting it off.

MAX. You should be hungry enough for it by this time.

ANATOL. Oh, we've had supper every night. But I've never known how to begin... the right words to use. I tell you... it's nervous work.

MAX. If you expect me to prompt you...

ANATOL. I expect you to stand by me. Smooth things down... keep her quiet... explain.

MAX. Then suppose you explain first.

ANATOL *considers for half a second. Then...*

ANATOL. She bores me.

MAX. I see! And there's another she... who doesn't?

ANATOL. Yes.

MAX *[with fullest comprehension]*. Ah!

ANATOL *[quite rapturously]*. And what another!

MAX. Please describe her.

ANATOL. She makes me feel as I've never felt before. She... I can't describe her.

MAX. No... one never can till it's all over.

ANATOL. She's a little girl that... well, she's an andante of a girl.

MAX. Not out of the ballet again?

ANATOL. No, no! She's like a waltz... simple, alluring, dreamy. Yes, that's what she's like. Don't you know...? No, of course you don't! And how can I explain? When I'm with her I find I grow simple too. If I take her a bunch of violets... the tears come into her eyes.

MAX. Try her with some diamonds.

ANATOL. I knew you wouldn't understand in the least. I should no more think of bringing her to a place like

this...! Those little eighteenpenny places suit her. You know... Soup or Fish: Entrée: Sweets or Cheese. We've been to one every night this week.

MAX. You said you'd had supper with Mimi.

ANATOL. So I have. Two suppers every night this week! One with the girl I want to win, and the other with the girl I want to lose. And I haven't done either yet.

MAX. Suppose you take Mimi to the Soup or Fish and bring the little Andante girl here. That might do it.

ANATOL. That shows you don't understand. Such a child! If you'd seen her face when I ordered a one and tenpenny bottle of wine.

MAX. Tears in her eyes?

ANATOL. She wouldn't let me.

MAX. What have you been drinking?

ANATOL. Shilling claret before ten. After ten, champagne. Such is life.

MAX. Your life!

ANATOL. But I've had enough of it. To a man with my nice sense of honour... my nice sense of honour, Max.

MAX. I heard.

ANATOL. If I go on like this much longer I shall lose my self-respect.

MAX. So shall I if I have much more to do with you.

ANATOL. How can I play-act at love if I don't feel it?

MAX. No doubt it's better acting when you do.

ANATOL. I remember telling Mimi in so many words... when we first met... when we swore that nothing should part us... My dear, I said, whichever first discovers that the thing is wearing thin must tell the other one straight out.

MAX. Besides swearing that nothing should part you. Good!

ANATOL. If I've said that once I've said it fifty times. We are perfectly free, and when the time comes we'll go each our own way without any fuss. Only remember, I said, what I can't stand is deceit.

MAX. Then I'm sure supper ought to go off very well.

ANATOL. Yes... but when it comes to the point... somehow I can't tell her. She'll cry. I know she'll cry, and I can't bear that. Suppose she cries and I fall in love with her again... then it won't be fair to the other one.

MAX. And the one thing you can't stand is deceit.

ANATOL. It'll be easier with you here. There's an honest, unromantic air about you that would dry any tears.

MAX. Happy to oblige. And how shall I start? Tell her she's better off without you. How can I?

ANATOL. Something of that sort. Tell her she won't be losing so much.

MAX. Yes...

ANATOL. There are hundreds of better-looking men... men better off.

MAX. Handsomer, richer... and cleverer.

ANATOL *[half humorously]*. I shouldn't exaggerate.

At this point the waiter shows in the Mimi in question. A lovely lady.

WAITER. This way, Madame.
She doesn't seem to be in the best of tempers.

MIMI. Oh... so here you are!

ANATOL *[cheerfully]*. Here we are. *[He takes off her wrap with much tenderness]*. Let me.

MIMI. You're a nice one, aren't you? I looked up and down...

ANATOL. A good thing you hadn't far to come.

MIMI. If you say you'll be there for me you ought. Hullo, Max. Come on... let's feed.
There's a knock at the door.

MIMI. Come in! What's he knocking for?

It is the WAITER *again, expectant of his orders, which* ANATOL *gives him...*

ANATOL. Bring supper.

MIMI *sits at the table and, cat-like, fusses her appearance.*

MIMI. You weren't in front.

ANATOL *[with careful candour]*. No... I had to...

MIMI. You didn't miss much. It was precious dull.

MAX. What was on before the ballet?

MIMI. I don't know. I go straight to the dressing-room and then I go on the stage. I don't bother about anything else. Anatol... I've a bit of news for you.

ANATOL *[his brow wrinkling a little]*. Have you, my dear? Important?

MIMI. Myes:.. may surprise you a bit... praps.
The supper arrives... oysters first.

ANATOL. Well... I've some for you, too.

MIMI. Wait a second. It's no concern of his.

This with a cock of the head towards the well-mannered, unconscious waiter.

ANATOL. You needn't wait... we'll ring.
The waiter departs. Supper has begun.

ANATOL. Well?

MIMI *[between her oysters]*. I think praps it will surprise you, Anatol... though I don't see why it should. Praps it won't... and it oughtn't to.

MAX. They've raised your salary!

ANATOL *[watching her]*. Tsch.

MIMI *[ignoring this levity]*. No... why should it? I say... are these Ostend or Whitstable?

ANATOL. Ostend... Ostend.

MIMI. I do like oysters. They're the only things you can go on eating and eating...

MAX *[who is doing his full share]*. And eating and eating and eating.

MIMI. That's what I always say.

ANATOL. Well... what's this news?

MIMI. D'you remember something you once said?

ANATOL. Which of the hundreds?

MIMI. Mimi... oh, I remember your saying it... The one thing I can't bear is deceit!

ANATOL, *not to mention* MAX, *is really taken aback.*

ANATOL. What!

MIMI. Always tell me the whole truth before it's too late.

ANATOL. Yes, I meant...

MIMI *[roguish for a moment]*. I say... suppose it was!

ANATOL. What d'you mean?

MIMI. Oh, it's all right... it isn't. Though it might be to-morrow.

ANATOL *[hot and cold]*. Will you please explain what you mean?

MAX *[unheeded]*. What's this?

MIMI *[meeting a fierce eye]*. You eat your oysters, Anatol, or I won't.

ANATOL. Damn the oysters!

MIMI. You go on with them.

ANATOL. You go on with what you were saying I don't like these jokes.

MIMI. Now didn't we agree that when it came to the point we weren't to make any fuss but...! Well... it has come.

ANATOL *[bereft of breath]*. D'you mean...?

MIMI. Yes, I do. This is the last time we have supper together.

ANATOL. Oh! Why... would you mind telling me?

MIMI. All is over between us.

ANATOL. Is it!

MAX *[unable to be silent longer]*. Admirable!

MIMI *[a little haughty]*. Nothing admirable about it. It's true.

ANATOL *[with trembling calm]*. My dear Mimi... please let me understand. Some one has asked you to marry him?

MIMI. Oh... I wouldn't throw you over for that.

ANATOL. Throw me over!

MIMI *[with her last oyster]*. It's no use, Anatol. I'm in love... head over ears.

MAX *goes into such a fit of laughter that choking follows, and he has to be patted on the back.* ANATOL *does the friendly office, somewhat distractedly.*

MIMI *[very haughty indeed]*. There's nothing to laugh at, Max.

MAX. Oh... oh... oh!

ANATOL. Never mind him. Now... will you please tell me...?

MIMI. I am telling you. I'm in love with somebody else and I'm telling you straight out like you told me.

ANATOL. Yes, but damn it... who?

MIMI. Now my dear... don't lose your temper.

ANATOL. I want to know.

MIMI. Ring the bell, Max, I'm so hungry.

MAX *recovering, does so.*

ANATOL. Hungry... at such a moment! Hungry!

MAX *[passing back to his chair, says in ANATOL'S ear].* Ah... but it'll be the first supper she's had to-night.

The waiter arrives, ANATOL *rends him savagely.*

ANATOL. And what do you want?

WAITER *[perfectly polite].* You rang, sir?

MAX. Bring the next thing.

While the plates are cleared ANATOL *fumes, but* MIMI *makes casual conversation.*

MIMI. Berthe Hoflich is going to Russia... it's settled.

MAX. Letting her go without any fuss?

MIMI. Oh... not more than a bit.

ANATOL. Where's the wine? Are you asleep tonight?

WAITER. Beg pardon, Sir... the wine *[he points it out under ANATOL'S nose].*

ANATOL. No, no... the champagne.

The waiter goes out for that and for the next course. As the door shuts on him...

ANATOL. Now then... will you please explain?

MIMI. Never take a man at his word! How many times have you told me... when we feel it's coming to an end, say so and end it calmly and quietly?

ANATOL *[with less and less pretence of self-control].* For the last time...

MIMI. He calls this quietly!

ANATOL. My dear girl... doesn't it occur to you that I have some right to know who...?

MIMI *hasn't let her appetite be disturbed; and at this moment she is relishing the wine, her eyes closed.*

MIMI. Ah!

ANATOL. Oh, drink it up... drink it up!

MIMI. Where's the hurry?

ANATOL *[really rather rudely]*. You generally get it down quick enough.

MIMI *[still sipping]*. Ah... but it's good-bye to claret, too, Anatol. It may be for years, it may be for ever.

ANATOL *[puzzled]*. Oh... why?

MIMI *[with fine resignation]*. No more claret for me... no more oysters... no more champagne! *[At this moment the waiter begins to hand the next course.]* And no more filets aux truffes! All done with now.

MAX. Oh... what a sentimental tummy! Have some?

MIMI *[with gusto]*. I will.

MAX. You've no appetite, Anatol.

The waiter having served them disappears once more, and once more ANATOL *plunges into trouble.*

ANATOL. Well, now... who's the lucky fellow?

MIMI *[serene and enjoying her filet aux truffes]*. If I told you you wouldn't be any the wiser.

ANATOL. But what sort of a chap? How did you come across him? What does he look like?

MIMI *[seraphic]*. He's a perfect picture of a man.

ANATOL. Oh, that's enough, of course.

MIMI. It's got to be. *[She re-starts her chant of self-sacrifice.]* No more oysters...!

ANATOL. Yes... you said that.

MIMI. No more champagne!

ANATOL. Damn it... is that his only excuse for existence... not being able to stand you oysters and champagne?

MAX. He couldn't live by that.

MIMI. What's the odds as long as I love him! I'm going to try throwing myself away for once... I've never felt like this about any one before.

MAX *[with a twinkle]*. Anatol could have given you an eighteenpenny supper, you know.

ANATOL. Is he a clerk? Is he a chimney-sweep? Is he a candlestick-maker?

MIMI. Don't you insult him.

MAX. Tell us.

MIMI. He's an Artist.

ANATOL. Music-hall artist?

MIMI *[with dignity]*. He's a fellow-artist of mine.

ANATOL. Oh... an old friend? You've been seeing a lot of him? Now then... how long have you been deceiving me?

MIMI. Should I be telling you if I had? I'm taking you at your word and speaking out before it's too late.

ANATOL. How long have you been in love with him; You've been thinking things... haven't you?

MIMI. Well... I couldn't help that.

ANATOL *[his temper rising fast]*. Oh!

MAX. Anatol!

ANATOL. Do I know the fellow?

MIMI. I don't suppose you've ever noticed him. He's in the chorus. He'll come to the front.

ANATOL. When did this affair start?

MIMI. To-night.

ANATOL. That's not true.

MIMI. It is. To-night I knew it was my fate.

ANATOL. Your fate! Max... her fate!

MIMI. Yes... my fate. Why not?

ANATOL. Now... I want the whole story. I've a right to it. You still belong to me, remember. How long has this been going on... how did it begin? When had he the impudence...?

MAX. Yes... I think you ought to tell us that.

MIMI *[impatient for the first time]*. Oh... this is all the thanks I get for doing the straight thing. Suppose I'd gone like Florrie with von Glehn. He hasn't found out yet about her and Hubert.

ANATOL. He will.

MIMI. Well, he may. And then again he mayn't. But you wouldn't have. I know a thing or two more than you do.

For proper emphasis she pours out another glass of wine.

ANATOL. Haven't you had enough?

MIMI. What... when it's the last I shall get?

MAX *[with a nod]*. For a week or so.

MIMI *[with a wink]*. Don't you think it. I'm going to stick to Carl. I love him for himself alone. He won't badger and bully me, the dear!

ANATOL. You and he have been carrying on under my nose for... how long? To-night indeed!

MIMI. Don't believe it if you don't want to.

MAX. Mimi... tell the truth. You two won't part friends unless you do.

ANATOL *[recovering some complacency]*. And then I've a bit of news for you.

MIMI. Well... it began like this...

Once more the waiter, with the champagne this time. Mimi stops very discreetly.

ANATOL. Oh, never mind him.

So she gets ahead, but in whispers, till the intruder shall have departed, which he does very soon.

MIMI. A fortnight ago he gave me a rose. Oh, so shy he was! I laughed... I couldn't help it.

ANATOL. Why didn't you tell me?

MIMI. Start telling you those sort of things! I should never have done.

ANATOL. Well?

MIMI. And he hung round at rehearsals. It made me cross at first... and then it didn't.

ANATOL *[viciously]*. No, I'm sure it didn't.

MIMI. Then we began to have little chats. And then I began to take such a fancy to him.

ANATOL. What did you chat about?

MIMI tries the champagne now.

MIMI. Oh... things. He got expelled from school. Then he went into business, and that wasn't any good. Then he thought perhaps he could act.

ANATOL. And never a word to me!

MIMI. And then we found out we used to live close to each other as children. Just fancy!

ANATOL. Most touching!

MIMI *[simply]*. Wasn't it?

ANATOL. Well?

The champagne (one fears it is) has an instant effect. She becomes a little vague and distant.

MIMI. That's all. It's my fate. You can't struggle against your fate, can you? Can't... struggle... against...

She stops suddenly. ANATOL *waits for a minute, then...*

ANATOL. But I've not been told what happened to-night.

MIMI. What happened...
Her eyes close.

MAX *[with fine effect]*. Hush... she sleeps.

ANATOL. Well, wake her up. Take that wine away from her. I want to know what happened to-night. Mimi... Mimi!
She wakes up, refreshed apparently.

MIMI. To-night? He told me he loved me.

ANATOL. What did you say?

MIMI. I said I was awfully glad. And I mustn't play the silly fool with him, must I? So it's good-bye to you.

ANATOL. It's him you're considering, not me.

MIMI *[with friendly candour]*. I don't think I ever really liked you, Anatol.

ANATOL. Thank you. I'm happy to say that leaves me cold.

MIMI. Don't be nasty.

ANATOL. Would you be surprised to hear that I hope to get on very well without you for the future?

MIMI. Really?

ANATOL throws his belated bomb.

ANATOL. I am in love, too.

And it is received by Mimi with the indifference of scepticism.

MIMI. Think of that!

ANATOL. And have been for some time. Ask Max. I was telling him when you came in.
She smiles at this in the most irritating way.

MIMI. Yes... I'm sure you were.

ANATOL *[piling it up]*. She's younger and rather prettier than you.

MIMI. I'm sure she is.

ANATOL. And I'd throw six hundred and seventy of your sort into the sea for her. *[But Mimi, not in the least impressed or distressed, laughs loud.]* You needn't laugh. Ask Max.

MIMI. If I were you I should have invented all that a little earlier.

ANATOL *[aghast]*. But it's true. I haven't cared that much about you since...! You've been boring me till I could only stay in the room with you by sitting and thinking of her. I've had to shut my eyes tight and think it was her I was kissing.

MIMI *[as comfortable as ever]*. Ditto to that, my dear.

ANATOL takes a nasty turn.

ANATOL. Well... that's not all. Say ditto to this if you can.

She notices the change in his tone, puts down her wine-glass, and looks squarely at him.

MIMI. To what?

ANATOL. I could have told you all you've been telling me months ago. And weeks ago I could have told you a good deal more.

MIMI. D'you mean...?

ANATOL. Yes, I do. I have behaved very badly to you... dear Mimi.

MIMI *gets up outraged.*

MIMI. Oh... you cad!

ANATOL *[grateful for the abuse]*. And only just in time, too... it seems! You wanted to get there first, did you? Well... thank God, I have no illusions!

But MIMI *has gone to collect her things: her hat, her cloak. And she puts them on too, not waiting a moment.*

MIMI. Oh... it only shows!

ANATOL. Doesn't it! Shows what?

MIMI. What a brute a man can be!

ANATOL. A brute... am I?

MIMI. Yes, a brute... a tactless brute. *[For a moment she gives him undivided attention.]* After all I never told you *that.*
Abysses open!

ANATOL. What!

MAX. Oh, never mind!

ANATOL. Never told me what? That you and he...

MIMI *[with most righteous indignation]*. And I never would have told it you. Only a man could be so... unpleasant!

Heaven knows what might happen, ANATOL *so twitches with rage and amazement. But the timely calm waiter saves the situation with yet another course.*

WAITER. I beg pardon.

ANATOL. Oh, go to...! *[He swallows the word, and recovers a little.]*

MIMI. Ices!

And, pleased as a child, she goes back to her chair to begin on hers. ANATOL, *in his turn, is deeply shocked.*

ANATOL. Can you eat ices at a moment like this?

MAX *[starting on his too]*. Yes, of course she can. It's good-bye to them for ever.

MIMI *[between the spoonfuls]*. No more ices... no more claret... no more champagne... no more oysters! *[Then, as she gets up to go.]* And, thank goodness... no more Anatol. *[But on her way to the door she notices on the sideboard the cigars. She helps herself to a handful. Then turns with the sweetest of smiles.]* Not for me. They're for him!
She departs.

MAX. I said it'd go off all right.

ANATOL is speechless.

VI. DYING PANGS



ONE SPRING AFTERNOON it is growing dusk in ANATOL'S *room, though through the open window the broad expanse of sky still shines clear and blue.* ANATOL *and* MAX *come in from a walk.*

MAX. I didn't mean to come up with you.

ANATOL. But don't go.

MAX. I shall be in the way.

ANATOL. I'm not sure she'll come. Three times out of four she won't.

MAX. I couldn't stand that.

ANATOL. She has excellent excuses. I dare say they're sometimes true.

MAX. Three times out of four.

ANATOL. Hardly that! Max, never, never be the lover of a married woman. There's nothing deadlier.

MAX. Except being her husband.

ANATOL. I've been in this mess... how long? Two years? More. It was two years last Easter that...

MAX. What's gone wrong?

ANATOL, *who has taken off neither coat nor hat, who still carries his stick in his hand, flings himself into a chair by the window.*

ANATOL. I'm weary of it. I wish... oh, I don't know what I wish.

MAX. Go abroad for a bit.

ANATOL. What's the good?

MAX. Wouldn't that bring it to an end quicker?

ANATOL. It might.

MAX. I've seen you through this sort of thing before. And the last time, how long did it take you to make up your mind to have done with that silly girl who had never been worth worrying about at all?

ANATOL. D'you think things are dead between us now?

MAX. That wouldn't matter... death doesn't hurt. But dying pangs do.

ANATOL. Job's comforter! You're quite right though.

MAX. Talk it over if you like... that helps sometimes. Not to bother over the whys and wherefores, but just to diagnose the case.

ANATOL. You'd like a cheerful ten minutes, would you?

MAX. Well... if you knew what a face you've been carrying round and round the park with you this afternoon.

ANATOL. She said she'd be there.

MAX. You weren't sorry she wasn't. You couldn't have looked as glad to see her as you did a couple of years ago.

ANATOL *[jumping up]*. It's true. But why... why? Have I got to go through it again... this cooling... cooling... growing cold? It's a perfect nightmare.

MAX. Run away then... go abroad. Or else make up your mind to tell her the truth.

ANATOL. What is the truth?

MAX. That you're tired of her.

ANATOL. Tell a woman that sort of truth only because you're weary of telling lies! A pleasant job.

MAX. No doubt you'd both of you do anything rather than face the brutal facts. But why?

ANATOL. Because we still don't thoroughly believe in the brutal facts... that's why. Even in this dull, dying autumn of our passion, there come to us days of spring... brighter than any we've ever known. You never so much want to be happy with a woman as when you know that you're ceasing to care for her. And when the happy moments come, we don't look too closely at them either. We only feel so ashamed... we mutely apologise for having doubted ourselves and each other. Love's like a candle flame... it flickers highest when it's going out.

MAX. And the end's in sight often much sooner than we think. You can date the death of some love affairs from the very first kiss. But a man may be on his deathbed and swear he's never better.

ANATOL. Not I, worse luck. In love affairs, my friend, I have always been a valetudinarian. Very likely I knew that I wasn't so ill as I thought... I felt so much the worse for that. I've sometimes fancied I have a sort of evil eye... turned inwards... to wither my own happiness.

MAX. A most rare and distinguished deformity.

ANATOL. You're welcome to it for me. Lord... how I've envied lucky, careless devils, who can be supremely happy in the passing moment. I've never valued a thing when I had it.

MAX. Often they don't know they're happy.

ANATOL. But they needn't feel guilty afterwards.

MAX. Guilty?

ANATOL. She and I knew well enough, didn't we, that though we might swear to love each other till death and after, yet the end of it all was never so very far off? Then why didn't we make the most of our time? For we never did. We're guilty of lost opportunity.

MAX. Oh, my dear Anatol... these dragged-out affairs are very bad for you. You're too quick-witted for them.

ANATOL. Am I?

MAX. Haunted by the past and afraid of the future... why, your one chance of happiness is to keep the present, at least, clear and clean and forgetful. Be a little stupid about it if you must.

ANATOL. Yes... yes.

MAX. But you jumble past, present, and future together till I don't think you know which you're living in. All you think of to-day is your yesterday's remorse for the sins that you mean to commit to-morrow.

ANATOL. And that's not half the nonsense it sounds.

MAX. Thank you. But we must all talk our share of platitudes too... so here goes for mine. Anatol, pull yourself together... be a man.

ANATOL. Max... you can't keep a straight face as you say it. Besides, I don't think I want to pull myself together. What a lot one loses by being a Man! There are a dozen ways of being an interesting invalid, and a fellow can choose his own. But there's only one way of being in rude health... and that's such a dull one. No, thanks.

MAX. Vanity!

ANATOL. Now for a platitude about vanity.

MAX. No. My only concern is that you won't go abroad.

ANATOL. I may. But it must be at a moment's notice. I hate planning things. I particularly hate packing, and looking up trains, and ordering a cab, and...

MAX. I'll do all that for you.

Suddenly, as if in response to some instinct, ANATOL *turns to the window and looks out.*

MAX. What is it?

ANATOL. Nothing.

MAX. I beg your pardon. I forgot. I'm off.

ANATOL. Max... at this moment I feel more in love with her than ever.

MAX. You probably are more in love with her than ever... at this moment.

ANATOL. Then don't order the cab.

MAX. But the boat-train don't leave for an hour and a half. I could send your luggage on after.

ANATOL. Thank you so much.

MAX. Now I must make a good exit... with an epigram.

ANATOL. Please.

MAX. Woman is a riddle...

ANATOL. Oh, really!

MAX. Wait, that's only half of it. Woman is a riddle... says a man. What a riddle would Man be for women... if they'd only brains enough to want to guess it.

ANATOL. Bravo.

MAX *bows to his applause and departs.* ANATOL *is more restless than ever. He paces the room. He goes to the window, where he can now hear some violinist practising in the room above. He lights a cigarette and sits down to wait as patiently as may be. But he hears a sound in the hall. He jumps up and goes to the door as it opens to admit* ELSA. *She comes in a little furtively. She is dressed as a smart rich woman should be, but she is rather heavily veiled.*

ANATOL. At last!

ELSA. Yes... I'm late.

He quite tenderly puts up the veil to kiss her. After that she takes it off, her hat too.

ELSA. I couldn't come before.

ANATOL. You might have let me know. Waiting does get on one's nerves. But you can stop a bit.

ELSA. Not long, darling. You see, my husband...
He breaks away from her almost rudely.

ELSA. My dear... can I help that?

ANATOL. No, you can't. There it is... we may as well face it. Come to me.

He is by the window and tries to draw her to him, but she hangs back.

ELSA. No, no... some one might see me.

ANATOL. It's too dark... and the curtain hides us.
She slips into his arms.

ANATOL. I wish you hadn't to go so soon. I've not seen you for two days. Then you only stayed ten minutes.

ELSA. Do you love me so?

ANATOL. Do I not? What aren't you to me? If I could have you here always...

ELSA. I'm glad.

ANATOL. Sit by me. *[He draws her close beside him.]* Where's your hand? *[He holds it and kisses it.]* That's the old man upstairs playing. Plays well, doesn't he?

They sit together there in the twilight, listening.

ELSA. Dear one!

ANATOL. Think if we were in Italy now... in Venice!

ELSA. I've not been to Venice since I was there for my honeymoon.

ANATOL shrivels.

ANATOL. Need you have said that?

ELSA *[with a gush of remorse]*. Darling... but I've never loved any one but you. No... not... not my husband.

ANATOL *[in some agony]*. Please do try and forget that you're married... just for thirty seconds. Can't you obliterate everything for a moment but ourselves?

She apparently does, and there is silence. Then a clock strikes and ELSA *looks round quickly.*

ELSA. What's that?

ANATOL. Elsa... never mind. Forget everything but me.

ELSA *[turning back to him all the more tenderly]*. Haven't I forgotten everything but you... for you?

ANATOL. Oh... my dear... my dear!

He kisses her hand and there is silence again. Then the lady says, very tentatively, almost tremulously...

ELSA. Anatol...

ANATOL. Yes, darling.

She makes a half serious little face at him as a sign that she really must be off. He won't understand.

ANATOL. What is it?

ELSA. I simply must go.

ANATOL. Must?

ELSA. Must.
He gets up... goes right away from her.

ANATOL. Very well.

ELSA. Oh... you are difficult.

ANATOL. Difficult! I sometimes think you want to drive me mad.

ELSA. And this is the thanks I get!

ANATOL. Thanks! What do you expect thanks for? Don't I give you as much love as I get? Is it worth less to you than yours is to me? Why thanks?

ELSA. Don't you owe me just a little gratitude for the sacrifice I've made for you?

ANATOL. I don't want sacrifices. If it was a sacrifice... then you didn't love me.

ELSA. Not love you! I'm an unfaithful wife for your sake... and you say I don't love you.

ANATOL. I didn't say so, Elsa.

ELSA. Oh... when I've done... what I've done.

ANATOL. What you've done! I'll tell you all that you've done. Seven years back you were a pretty gawky girl, weren't you? Your people got you married... because that's the thing to do with pretty gawky girls. Then you went a honeymoon in Venice... you liked that well enough.

ELSA *[indignantly]*. I didn't.

ANATOL. Oh, yes, you did! You were in love... more or less.

ELSA. I wasn't.

ANATOL. He was, then. I'm sure he petted you nicely... anyhow, you were his little wife. Then back to Vienna... and after a bit to boredom. Because you'd grown a pretty woman by now... and, really, he's a precious fool. So you learned to flirt... harmlessly enough, no doubt! You tell me I'm the only man you've ever really loved. I can't prove it... but let's say that's so. It flatters me to believe it.

ELSA. You call me a flirt.

ANATOL. I do. Did you never indulge in that sensual hypocrisy?

ELSA. Oh... you're unjust!

ANATOL. Am I? Then real temptation came. You played with it... you were longing for a romance. For you grew prettier than ever... and your husband more of a fool. He was getting fat too... and ugly. So at last your

conscience yielded. You coolly looked round for a lover, and chanced to hit upon me.

ELSA. Chanced to hit upon...

ANATOL. Yes... if it hadn't been me it would have been the next man. You thought you were unhappily married... or at least not happily married enough. You wanted to be... one calls it loved. Of course, it was just a flirtation between us at first... we skated quite skilfully over thin ice. Till one fine day... what was it...? one of your friends looking happier than usual... the sight of some merry little baggage in a box at the theatre. Well, and why shouldn't I?... said you. And you took the plunge. Leaving out fine phrases... that's the story of this little adventure.

She does not look at him, but in her voice is shame and reproach.

ELSA. Oh... Anatol, Anatol!

ANATOL. Well?

ELSA. You don't mean it.

ANATOL. I do.

ELSA. That's what you think of me.

ANATOL. I'm afraid so.

ELSA. Then I'd better go.

ANATOL. I'm not keeping you.

And she does go... quite as far as the door. But there she lingers.

ELSA. You Want me to.

ANATOL. My dear! Two minutes ago it was you that were in such a hurry.

ELSA *looks up in some relief.*

ELSA. Darling... you know I can't help that. My husb...
He suddenly flashes round on her.

ANATOL. Elsa.

ELSA. Yes.

ANATOL. You do love me? Say so.

ELSA *[tears in her eyes]*. Do I? Good heavens!... What better proofs can I give?

ANATOL. Shall I tell you?

ELSA. I love you with all my heart.

ANATOL. Then don't go. Don't go back home. Come away somewhere with me. Let me have you all to myself.

ELSA. Anatol!

ANATOL. Isn't that obviously the thing to do? How can you go back to him... loving me with all your heart? How could I ever have let you? We've been taking it all as a matter of course. But don't you see that it can't go on... it's impossible. Elsa, dear, come away with me... you must. We'll go wherever you like. To Sicily? Very well... further then. I'll go as far as you like, Elsa!

ELSA *[blankly]*. My dear Anatol!

ANATOL. No one to take you from me ever again Far away, dear... we two... belonging to each other.

ELSA. Go right away?

ANATOL. Yes... anywhere.

ELSA. But... my dear Anatol...

ANATOL. Well? ELSIE *[with a sort of puzzled blandness]*. Where's the need?

ANATOL. Where's the...!

ELSA. Why go away... when we can see each other here almost as often as we want?

ANATOL *takes a long look at her and then smiles queerly.*

ANATOL. Yes... almost. True... there is no need.

ELSA. You didn't mean it, did you?

ANATOL. Did I?

He turns away from her. She follows him prettily.

ELSA. Are you still angry?

The clock chimes again. He turns back with the utmost politeness.

ANATOL. I'm sure you must go.

ELSA *[a little flustered]*. Oh dear!... I didn't know it was so late. Till to-morrow. I can come at six.
He helps her with her things.

ANATOL. Please do.

ELSA. Not going to kiss me?

ANATOL. Of course!
He kisses her.

ELSA *[encouragingly]*. Things'll look brighter to-morrow.

ANATOL. Good-bye.

He takes her to the door, where she stops and looks up, all sweetness and charm.

ELSA. Kiss me again.

He looks at her hard for a minute, then very deliberately does so, and she slips away. He turns back and savagely exclaims...

ANATOL. She asked for that kiss. And it makes her another cheap woman at last... *[Then to himself in the glass]* And you're a fool... a fool!

VII. THE WEDDING MORNING



Note... In Vienna, of course, a man's clothes for a wedding are what we should call evening dress. It also appears that on such occasions, to every bridesmaid there is a groomsman, whose business at is to provide her with a bouquet.
It is a brilliant winter morning; the lately risen sun shines straight into ANATOL'S *room.* ANATOL *stands on the hither side of his bedroom door, which is a little open. He is listening. After a moment he closes the door very softly and comes back into the room. He looks nervous and rather puzzled. He sits down on not the most comfortable chair with a fretful sigh. Then he gets up to ring the bell. Then he sits down again. His costume is the strangest mixture of early morning and overnight that ever was: a dressing jacket and dress trousers, slippers, and a scarf round the neck; but he looks bathed and shaved, and his hair is brushed.*
FRANZ, *his man, answers the bell, and, not seeing him, is going into the bed room.* ANATOL *jumps up and stops him, more by gestures than with his voice, which he hardly raises above a whisper.*

ANATOL. Here, where are you going? I didn't see you.

FRANZ. Did you ring, sir?

ANATOL. Yes... bring some breakfast.

FRANZ. Very good, sir.
And he is going for it.

ANATOL. Quietly, you idiot. Don't make such a noise. *[FRANZ is quiet, and apparently comprehending. When he is well out of the room, ANATOL makes for the bedroom door again, and again listens.]* Still asleep!

FRANZ *comes back with the light breakfast, which he puts on a table by the fire, saying, very comprehendingly indeed...*
]FRANZ. Two cups, sir?

ANATOL *[with a look at him]*. Yes. *[Then he can hear a bell ring, and he jumps.]* There's some one at the door. At this time in the morning! *[FRANZ goes out again as quietly. ANATOL looks around, out of the window, at the bedroom door, then doubtfully at the teacups, and says...]* I don't feel in the least like getting married.

In bursts MAX, *in the best of spirits;* FRANZ *behind, looking as if he ought to have stopped him.*

MAX. My dear fellow!

ANATOL. Tsch!... don't talk so loud. Get another cup, Franz.

MAX *[at the table]*. Two cups here already.

ANATOL. Get another cup, Franz, and then get out.

FRANZ *obeys with discretion.* ANATOL *is very fretful.*

ANATOL. What are you doing here at eight o'clock in the morning?

MAX. Nearly ten!

ANATOL. Well... what are you doing here at ten o'clock in the morning?

MAX. It's my wretched memory.

ANATOL. Don't talk so loud!

MAX. I say... you're very jumpy. What's the matter?

ANATOL. Yes... I am very jumpy.

MAX. But not To-day.

ANATOL. Oh... what is it you want?

MAX. You know your cousin Alma's to be my bridesmaid at the wedding. About her bouquet....

ANATOL *[with rather sulky indifference]*. What about it?

MAX. I forgot to order it and I forgot to ask her what colour she's wearing. What do you think... white or red or blue or green?

ANATOL. Certainly not green!

MAX. Are you sure?

ANATOL. You know she never wears green.

MAX. How do I know?

ANATOL. Don't shout! It's nothing to be excited about.

MAX *[a little exasperated]*. Do you know what colour she will be wearing at your wedding this morning?

ANATOL. Yes... red or blue.

MAX. Which?

ANATOL. What does it matter?

MAX. Damn it... for the bouquet.

ANATOL. You order two... you can wear the other in your hair.

MAX. That's a silly joke.

ANATOL *[his head on his hand]*. I'll be making a sillier in an hour or two.

MAX. You're a cheerful bridegroom... I must say!

ANATOL. Well... I've been very much upset.

MAX. Anatol... you're hiding something.

ANATOL *[with great candour]*. Not at all.

From the bedroom rings a female voice, loud and clear.

THE VOICE. Anatol!

In the silence that follows MAX *looks at* ANATOL *in something more than surprise.*

ANATOL *[casually]*. Excuse me a minute.

He goes and gingerly opens the bedroom door. A pretty pair of arms appears and rests upon his shoulders. In answer to the embrace, for a moment his head disappears. He shuts the door then and returns to his scandalised friend.

MAX. Well really, Anatol!

ANATOL. Let me explain.

MAX. If this is how you begin your married life...!

ANATOL. Don't be an ass.

MAX. I'm not a moral man myself... but hang it all!

ANATOL. Will you let me explain?

MAX *[looking at his watch]*. Hurry up then... your wedding's at half-past twelve.

ANATOL. So it is!

He sits silent for a moment; then slowly begins...

ANATOL. Last night I was at my father-in-law's... my future father-in-law's.

MAX. I know that. I was there.

ANATOL. So you were... I forgot. You were all there. You were all very lively. There was lots of champagne. A lot of you drank my health... and Sophia's health.

MAX. I drank your health... and her health... and wished you both happiness.

ANATOL. So you did. Happiness! Thank you very much.

MAX. You thanked me last night.

ANATOL. They kept it up till past twelve.

MAX. I know. I kept it up.

ANATOL. They kept it up till really... I thought I was happy.

MAX. Well... that's enough about that.

ANATOL. That fellow Sophia was in love with as a girl...!

MAX. Young Ralmen?

ANATOL. Silly young ass... writes verses! Sort of fellow who seems to be everybody's first love and nobody's last.

MAX. Hadn't you better come to the point?

ANATOL. I didn't mind his being there... it rather amused me. We broke up about half-past twelve, didn't we? I gave Sophia a kiss... and she gave me a kiss. No... she gave me an icicle. My teeth just chattered with it as I went downstairs.

MAX. Well?

ANATOL. There were three or four of them still on the doorstep... and they wished me happiness all over again. And Uncle Edward was quite drunk and would insist on kissing me. And Professor Lippmann sang a comic song... in the street. Then Sophia's first love turned up his coat collar and went off... on the tiles. And then somebody... I forget who that was... said of course I'd spend the night under Sophia's window. Damn nonsense... it was snowing! And after a bit they'd all tailed off... and there I was alone.

MAX. *[to express some sympathy]*. T-t-t!

ANATOL. Alone, in the cold and the snow! Great big flakes... perfectly beastly.

MAX. So what did you do?

ANATOL. So... I thought I'd go to the ball at the Opera.

MAX. Oho!

ANATOL. And why not?

MAX. Now I'm afraid I understand.

ANATOL. Not at all! There I stood in the cold and the snow...!

MAX. Teeth still chattering.

ANATOL. It was beastly cold. And it suddenly came over me... made me perfectly wretched... that I wasn't

going to be a free man any more. Never more a jolly bachelor! Never to go home again without some one asking where you've been. I'd had my last night out. I'd been in love for the last time.

MAX. Get on.

ANATOL. They were in full swing at the Opera. I watched for a bit. Oh... that swish of a silk petticoat! And don't a girl's eyes shine through a mask? It makes her neck look so white. Then I just plunged into it all. I wanted to breathe in the sound and the scent of it... to bathe in them.

MAX *[consulting his watch again]*. Time's getting on. What happened then?

ANATOL. Was I drunk with champagne at papa-in-law's?

MAX. Not a bit.

ANATOL. I got drunk with that dancing... mad drunk. It was my Opera ball... given on purpose to say good-bye to poor bachelor me! I say... you remember Katinka?

MAX. Green-eyed Katinka!

ANATOL. Tsch!

MAX *points to where the voice came from.*

MAX. Is that Katinka?

ANATOL. No, it just isn't Katinka. Green-eyes was there, though! And a pretty, dark girl called... no, never you mind about her. Do you remember the tiger-lily girl that Theodore...? Lisa! I didn't see Theodore... but we didn't look far for him. I could tell them all through their masks. I knew their voices... I knew their ankles. One girl I wasn't sure about. And whether I was running after her or she after me...? But something in the way she swung her shoulders...! And we met and we dodged, and at last she caught me by the arm... and then I knew her right enough.

MAX. An old friend?

ANATOL. Can't you guess? When did I get engaged? It's not more than two or three months ago. That meant the usual lie... Going away for a bit... back soon.

MAX points again.

MAX. Lona?

ANATOL. Tsch!

MAX. What... not even Lona?

ANATOL. Lona right enough... don't fetch her in yet. We went and sat under a palm. Back again... she said. Yes... I said. When?... she said. Not till last night. Why haven't you written... where on earth have you been? Off the map... I said.. but I'm back again, and I love you still. And don't I love you still?... she said. And the

waiter brought the champagne. We were very happy.

MAX. Well... I'm blessed.

ANATOL. Then we got into a cab... just as we used to. She put her head on my shoulder. Never to part she said... and went to sleep. We didn't get back till seven. She's still asleep... was, when you came.

The story over, he sits contemplating the world generally with puzzled distress. MAX *jumps up.*

MAX. Anatol... come to your senses.

ANATOL. Never to part! And I've got to be married at half-past twelve!

MAX. Yes... to somebody else.

ANATOL. Isn't that just like life? It's always somebody else one gets married to.

MAX. You ought to change... you've not much time.

ANATOL. I suppose I'd better. *[He studies the bedroom door doubtfully, and then turns to his friend.]*

ANATOL. You know... looked at in a certain light this is pathetic.

MAX. It's perfectly disgraceful.

ANATOL. Yes... it is disgraceful. But it's very pathetic, too.

MAX. Never mind that... you hurry up.

At this moment the door opens and LONA *first puts her head round it and then comes in. A hand some shrew. She is still in her fancy ball dress; the domino thrown over it making an excellent morning wrap.*

LONA. Oh... it's only Max.

MAX. Only Max.

LONA. Why didn't you tell me?... I'd have come in before. How's Max... and what do you think of this ruffian?

MAX *[feelingly]*. I think that's just what he is.

LONA. I've been crying my eyes out for him for months. And all the time he's been... where have you been?

ANATOL *[with picturesque vagueness]*. Over there.

LONA. Didn't he write to you either? But now I've got him safe, he doesn't get away again. Never to part, darling! Give me a kiss.

ANATOL. No... really...

LONA. Max doesn't mind *[taking his chin between finger and thumb, she secures her kiss]*. What a face! Look pleasant. Let's all have breakfast and be happy.

She settles herself most domestically at the little table and begins to pour out tea. ANATOL *looks on miserably.*

ANATOL. Certainly.

MAX. Lona, I'm afraid I can't stop... thanks very much. *[Then glancing at the wretched ANATOL.]* And I really don't see...

LONA. What don't you see?

MAX. Anatol ought...

LONA. What ought Anatol?

MAX. Anatol, it's high time that you... that you...

LONA. High time for what?

MAX. He ought to dress.

LONA *surveys him in his queer costume without any disapproval.*

LONA. What's the hurry? We'll stop at home today.

ANATOL. My dear... I am afraid I can't.

LONA. You can if you try.

ANATOL. I'm asked out.

LONA. You send a message and say you can't go.

MAX. He must go.

ANATOL *[with desperate inspiration]*. I am asked to a wedding.

LONA. Oh... that don't matter.

ANATOL. But it does matter. I'm... what you might call the best man.

LONA. Is your bridesmaid in love with you

MAX *[who has followed these efforts encouragingly]*. We won't go into that.

LONA. Because I am... so he'd much better stop at home with me.

ANATOL. My dear child, I must go.

MAX. He really must.

ANATOL. For a couple of hours.

LONA. Sit down, both of you. How many lumps, Max?

MAX *thinks it tactful to obey.*

MAX. Three.

LONA *[to ANATOL, with a fond smile]*. How many lumps, darling?

ANATOL. I ought to be gone now.

LONA *[with loving severity]*. How many lumps?

ANATOL sits down helplessly.

ANATOL. You know I always take two.

LONA. Cream or lemon?

ANATOL. You know I take lemon.

LONA. Lemon and two lumps of sugar. Those are his principles.

MAX. I say... I must be off.

ANATOL. No... no... no.

LONA. Drink your tea first, Max.
The two drink their tea, unhappily. Then...

ANATOL. My dear child... I simply must go and change.

LONA. Good goodness!... what time is this silly wedding?

MAX. Half-past twelve.

LONA. Are you asked, too!

MAX. Yes.

LONA. Who’s the man?

ANATOL. No one you know.

LONA. But who? Not a secret, is it?

ANATOL. The whole thing’s a deadly secret.

LONA. With a best man and bridesmaids? Nonsense.

ANATOL *[explicit]*. You see... his people...

LONA. You're both dear boys... but you are telling lies.

MAX *[with dignity]*. I beg your pardon.

LONA. God knows what it's all about, but it doesn't matter. You go where you like, Max... Anatol stops with me.

ANATOL *is getting desperate.*

ANATOL. I tell you I can't. The man's my best friend. I must get him married.

LONA *[prettily to MAX]*. Shall I let him go?

MAX. Dear Lona... I think you'd better.
The tension is a trifle relieved, but...

LONA. Where's it to be?

ANATOL *[very uneasily]*. What do you want to know that for?

LONA. I'd like to go and look on.

ANATOL. You mustn't do that.

LONA. I must have a look at your bridesmaid, Anatol. Best men marry bridesmaids, don't they? I can't have you getting married... so make up your mind to that.

MAX. What would you do if he did?

LONA *[with perfect simplicity]*. Forbid the banns.

ANATOL. Would you now?

LONA. Or I might make a scene at the church.

MAX. That's commonplace... I shouldn't do that.

LONA. No... one ought to invent something new.

MAX. Such as...?

LONA. Turning up at the wedding... dressed like a bride too! That'd be striking.

MAX *[drily]*. Very! I must go.
His decisive getting up encourages ANATOL.

ANATOL. Look here, Lona... I simply must change. I shall be late!

In comes FRANZ *with a bouquet swathed in its tissue paper.*

FRANZ. The flowers, sir.

LONA. What flowers?

Wherever ANATOL *may wish his man, he does not send him away, so* FRANZ, *though not without a sly look at* LONA, *repeats politely...*

FRANZ. The flowers, sir.

ANATOL *takes them silently, and* FRANZ *departs.*

LONA. Still got Franz, have you? You said you were going to get rid of him.

MAX. And I almost think you'd better, Anatol.

LONA. Let's see.

MAX. It's the bouquet for his bridesmaid.

LONA *detaches one wrap of the paper. Orange blossoms!*

LONA. It's a bride's bouquet!

ANATOL *[with great readiness].* Well, I say... if they haven't sent the wrong one! Franz... Franz!
He carries it off.

MAX. And the wretched bridegroom has got his!

ANATOL serenely returns.

ANATOL. I've sent Franz back with it.

MAX. And I really must go.

He kisses LONA'S *hand and is off.* ANATOL *catches him half through the door.*

ANATOL. What the devil shall I do?

MAX. Confess.

ANATOL. How can I?

MAX. I'll come back soon.

ANATOL. Do... for goodness' sake.

MAX. But what colour will your cousin be in?

ANATOL. Blue... or red.

MAX. Damn!

ANATOL *most unwillingly shuts the door on him, for no sooner has he than* LONA *is round his neck.*

LONA. Thank goodness he's gone... darling.

ANATOL. Darling!

LONA. Be nicer than that!

ANATOL. I said Darling.

LONA. Must you go to this silly wedding?

ANATOL. I'm afraid I must.

LONA. Shall I drive with you to the church?

ANATOL. Better not. I'll see you in the evening. You've to go to the theatre.

LONA. I'll send and say I'm ill.

ANATOL. I wouldn't. I'll come and fetch you. Now I must dress. Lord... look at the time! Franz! Franz! *[FRANZ is there.]* Have you put out my things?

FRANZ. Your wedding things, sir?

ANATOL *[very steadily].* Yes... the things in which I always go to weddings.

FRANZ. I will see to it, sir.

ANATOL. After the theatre then... that's settled.

LONA. And I thought we'd have such a jolly day.

ANATOL. Don't be childish. Jolly days have to give way to more important matters.

LONA *is round his neck again.*

LONA. I love you dreadfully. I don't know what's more important than that.

ANATOL *[as he removes her].* Then you'll have to learn.

FRANZ *passes through from the bedroom saying...*

FRANZ. Everything's ready, sir.

ANATOL. Thank you. You've a lot to learn yet.

Into the bedroom he goes, and his talk — or rather his shouting — from there is muffled by the changing of vest and shirt, and punctuated by the tying of ties and slipping in of studs and the brushing of hair. LONA, *left alone, twists discontentedly about the room.*

LONA. Are you really going to change?

ANATOL. I couldn't go to a wedding like this, could I?

LONA? Must you go?

ANATOL. Don't let's begin it all over again.

LONA. I shall see you this evening?

ANATOL. After the theatre.

LONA. Don't be late.

ANATOL *[blandly]*. Late! Why should I be late?

LONA. You kept me waiting an hour once.

ANATOL. Did I? I dare say I did.

LONA is still on the prowl.

LONA. Anatol... you've got a new picture.

ANATOL. Yes... do you like it?

LONA. What do I know about pictures?

ANATOL. It's quite a good one.

LONA. Did you bring it back with you?

ANATOL *[puzzled]*. Bring it back!

LONA. From where you went away to.

ANATOL. Of course... from where I went away to! No... it was a present.

Silence for a moment. A shade of half-angry cunning falls on LONA'S *face.*

LONA. Anatol.

ANATOL. What is it?

LONA. Where did you go?

ANATOL. I told you.

LONA. You didn’t.

ANATOL. I did... last night.

LONA. I’ve forgotten.

ANATOL. I went to Bohemia.

LONA. Why Bohemia?

ANATOL. Why not

LONA. Were you shooting?

ANATOL. Yes... rabbits.

LONA. For three months?

ANATOL. Everyday.

It sounds as if he were rearing slightly under this spur of cross-examination.

LONA. Why didn’t you come and say good-bye to me before you went?

ANATOL. I just thought I wouldn’t.

LONA. Tried to give me the slip, didn’t you?

ANATOL *[ironically bland]*. No... no... no... no... no...

LONA. You did try once.

ANATOL. I tried.

LONA *[sharply]*. What’s that?

ANATOL. I said I tried. I tried hard... but it didn’t come off.

LONA. I should think not... and it’s not likely to.

ANATOL. Ha ha!

LONA. What did you say?

ANATOL. I said Ha ha.

LONA. It isn’t funny. Glad enough to come back to me that time... weren’t you?

ANATOL. That time.

LONA. So you are this time. Just a little bit in love with me... aren’t you?

ANATOL. Worse luck.

LONA. What?

ANATOL. Worse luck.

LONA. Yes... shout it from the next room. You dare say that to my face?

ANATOL sticks round the door a head undergoing a hairbrush.

ANATOL. Worse luck!

LONA *makes for it, but it disappears and the door closes. She calls through the crack.*

LONA. What do you mean by that, Anatol?

It is getting to be rather angry chaff, this.

ANATOL. Things can't go on like this for ever.

LONA. What?

ANATOL. They can't go on for ever.

LONA. Can't they? Ha ha!

ANATOL. What?

LONA, *with some violence, tugs the door open.*

LONA. I said Ha ha.

ANATOL. Shut the door... shut the door.
He slams it to.

LONA. No, my darling... you don't get rid of me in a hurry.

ANATOL. Think not?

LONA. I'm sure not.

ANATOL. Quite sure?

LONA. Quite... quite... quite sure.

ANATOL. You can't hang round my neck for ever.

LONA. We'll see about that.

ANATOL. Don't you be silly.

LONA. Do you see me giving you up?

ANATOL. When you can't help it.

LONA. When will that be?

ANATOL. When I get married.

The lady, whose eyes are flashing now, begins to drum the door with her fingers.

LONA. And when will that be... my precious?

ANATOL *[unkindly mimicking]*. Soon... my precious.

LONA. How soon?
The drumming grows louder.

ANATOL. Don't bang on the door. This time next year I may be quite an old married man.

LONA. Fool!

ANATOL. Suppose I get married in a month or two?

LONA. Some one simply waiting to marry you?

ANATOL. There is... at this very moment.

LONA. In a month or two?

ANATOL. Or even less.

LONA *laughs with great derision.*

ANATOL. You needn't laugh. I'll be married in a week.

LONA *still laughs.*

ANATOL. You needn't laugh, Lona!

LONA *tumbles herself on the sofa, she is laughing so much. And then* ANATOL *walks in, sprucely dressed: coated, hatted, and gloved for his wedding; very self-possessed, moreover, now.*

ANATOL. I said you need not laugh.

LONA. When are you going to be married?

ANATOL. At half-past twelve.
She stops very short in her laughter.

LONA. What?

ANATOL. At half-past twelve, my dear.

LONA. Anatol, don't be silly.

ANATOL. I am perfectly serious. I am going to be married at half-past twelve to-day.

By this she is taking it in and her breath is leaving her.

LONA. Are you...?

ANATOL. Franz!

FRANZ is at the door.

FRANZ. Sir?

ANATOL. Bring those flowers.

LONA. Anatol...!

FRANZ *brings in the orange blossoms which were not sent back.* LONA *understands now. She makes a grab at them.* FRANZ *is too quick for her and secures them to* ANATOL, *and then departs again, suppressing a grin.*

LONA. It's true?

ANATOL *[Coolly]*. Quite.

But LONA *is not to be conquered with coolness now. It seems that she is endowed with the very rare faculty of losing her temper. She suddenly makes for* ANATOL *and the bouquet with such complete abandonment of the conventions of civilisation that, with no manly dignity at all, he bolts from her.*

ANATOL. What are you up to?

LONA. You beast... you beast.

It's the bouquet seems most to excite her and it's that she's after. ANATOL, *other methods of defending it failing, jumps on a chair at last and holds it above his head, at which moment* MAX *arrives back dressed for the wedding too and with his bouquet: Pink roses.*

ANATOL. Here... Max... help!

The ever-obliging MAX *incautiously comes near. Pink roses are better than nothing to* LONA, *and with one snatch she has them from him and with half-a-dozen pulls she has them in pieces and under her stamping feet.* MAX *is in agony.*

MAX. Lona... don't do it! It's my bouquet! *[He surveys the wreckage.]* Well... now what shall I do?

The lady having sated her natural lust for the destruction of something — anything; bursts into violent tears,

and abandons herself to the sofa. ANATOL *addresses the situation, still standing on the chair.*

ANATOL. Oh... she has been riling me! Now start crying, of course. I told you not to laugh! Said I daren't run away from her... said I daren't get married. So now I shall... just to spite her.

In pursuance of which he gets off the chair. But LONA *has another fit of fury...*

LONA. Sneak! Liar!

So on he gets again. Again she tumbles down exhausted. Poor MAX *meanwhile collects the remnants of the roses.*

MAX. I say... look at my flowers.

LONA. I thought it was his. I don't care. You're as bad as he is!

ANATOL. Do be reasonable.

LONA *[flinging her wrongs to heaven].* Reasonable! When you treat me like this! But you wait! I'll show you! You'll see!

She jumps up and makes for the door. By good luck MAX *is in the way.*

ANATOL. Where are you going?

LONA. You'll soon see. You let me go!

MAX *[his back to the door and holding tight to the handle.]* Lona... what are you up to?

LONA. You let me go! You let me go!

ANATOL. Be reasonable.

LONA. You won't... won't you!

She then proceeds to wreck the room. The teapot goes into the fire and the teacups out of the window. The table goes over and so do the chairs. A cigar box smashes the new picture and cushions fly around. MAX *and* ANATOL *do nothing. What can they do? Her work accomplished, the lady has violent hysterics. When the tumult has a little subsided says* ANATOL...

ANATOL. Oh... I say! Why get married when you can have all the comforts of home without it?
And they gaze at the patient awhile.

ANATOL. She's getting quieter.

MAX. But we must go. And look at my flowers!

FRANZ *comes in to announce...*

FRANZ. The carriage is at the door, sir.

And goes out again.

ANATOL. The carriage! What am I to do?

He sits beside the sobbing LONA *and takes her hand.* MAX *sits on the other side, and takes her other hand.*

MAX. Lona! *[he adds over the top of her head to ANATOL]*. Go along... I'll put it right somehow.

ANATOL. I really must. Poor girl... I can't...

He is obviously melting towards the sobbing LONA.

MAX. You go along.

ANATOL. Are you sure you can manage her?

MAX. Yes... I'll follow you. Watch me when I get there. I'll wink if it's all right.

ANATOL. I don't like it... poor child. She might...

MAX *envisages new complications.*

MAX. Will you go?

ANATOL. I'd better!

He gets to the door. His heart melts again towards the poor thing who has indeed in the last few minutes sacrificed much to her love for him. He comes back and kisses the top of her head. Then he goes to his wedding. MAX, *left alone with her, perseveringly strokes the hand he holds. She sobs on.*

MAX. Ahum!

LONA *looks up.*

LONA. Where's he gone?

MAX *[securing the other hand]*. Now... Lona!
Only just in time, for she jumps up.

LONA. Where's he gone?

MAX. You'd never catch him.

LONA. Yes, I will.

MAX. Lona... you don't want to make a scandal.

LONA. Yes, I do. Where is the wedding?

MAX. Never mind.

She tries to pull away.

LONA. I'm going there!

MAX. No, you're not. What good would it do?

LONA. To be treated like this!

MAX. Doesn't it always happen?

LONA. Be quiet with your beastly philosophy.

MAX. If you weren't in such a temper you'd see that you'd only get laughed at for your pains.

LONA *[viciously]*. On the wrong side of their mouths!

MAX. Think now... there are lots of good fish in the sea.

LONA. That shows how much you know about me.

MAX. Suppose he were dead or gone abroad? Suppose you'd really lost him... and no help for it.

LONA. What d'you mean by that?

MAX. It's not so much you that he's treating badly... Suppose he leaves her some day...! Wait and see.

She has calmed a little to the influence of his smooth voice. And now her face lights up with the wildest triumphant happiness.

LONA. Oh... if I thought he would!

MAX *lets her go.*

MAX. That's nice of you.

LONA. Let me just get a bit of my own back!

MAX. Hell knows no fury like a woman scorned.

LONA. No, it doesn't... does it?

MAX. That is heroic of you. And while you're waiting, can't you avenge your whole sex on every man you meet?

LONA. I will.

She is restored to sanity and self-respect. MAX *looks at his watch rather anxiously.*

MAX. Now I've just time to take you home in a cab. *[He adds half to himself.]* If I don't... catastrophe for sure! *[He offers her his arm.]* Say good-bye to this happy home.

LONA. Not good-bye.

MAX. Till you come back a goddess of vengeance... though you're really a rather silly woman. Not but what that answers the purpose as a rule.

LONA. For the present...

Most dramatically, with flashing eyes and curling lip she goes off with him, leaving the wrecked room.

CURTAIN

Light-'O-Love (1896)

Original German Title: 'Liebelei'

Translated by Bayard Quincy Morgan, 1912

With the premiere of *Liebelei* on 9 October 1895 at Vienna's Burgtheater, orchestrated by director Max Burckhard and starring Adele Sandrock as Christine, Schnitzler became an overnight sensation. The play was performed on many stages in Europe and established his reputation as one of the most important German-language playwrights of his generation.

The first Act takes place in the apartment of a young man name Fritz, whose friend Theodor has invited two young women, Mizi and Christine, to dinner. Theodor hopes to distract Fritz from his troubling affair with a married woman by introducing the "sweet girl" Christine. The atmosphere is lively, but while Mizi doesn't take her relationship with Theodor very seriously, Christine sees Fritz as the love of her life. During dinner, the husband of his lover arrives at Fritz's apartment with the collected love letters and challenges him to a duel. After the enraged spouse leaves, Fritz, noticeably shaken, tells Theodor about the incident. Fritz tries to reassure him, saying that such duels almost always end well. Theodor and the two young women then leave Fritz's apartment.

As early as 1881, when he was only nineteen, Schnitzler noted in his diary the idea for a drama that would later become *Liebelei*. A first outline of the plot, which has survived to this day, was likely written ten years later. At that time, Schnitzler planned to present the material as a "folk play" under the title *Das arme Mädel*. In the autumn of 1893, he worked out the first act of the planned play: It is set in a suburban dance school; the meeting of Fritz and Christine (at this time still called Marie), which is no longer explicitly stated in the published play, is shown in this act. However, after criticism from his writer friends Richard Beer-Hofmann, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Felix Salten, and Gustav Schwarzkopf, he discarded this act and began working on the material three more times in the following months. In his fifth attempt, he finally drafted the three-act form of the final version at the beginning of September 1894 and began writing it on September 13, 1894; the title *Liebelei* also appears for the first time at this stage.

In *Liebelei*, Schnitzler's first major theatrical success, Schnitzler addresses the social issue of extramarital love. During the course of the play, a kind of class division emerges as Theodor describes two types of women. The "interesting women," according to Theodor, are married women from the upper class, bringing "danger," "tragedy," and "great scenes." In comparison, a poor girl from the suburbs, one can only hope to find "relaxation," "tenderness," and "gentle emotion." Furthermore, the play contains connections to bourgeois tragedy, as the second act revolves around preserving Christine's good reputation.

The duel between the gentleman and Fritz arises solely from social norms, not from love. The affair must remain undiscovered, otherwise it would be sanctioned by society. The reasons for the gentleman's indirect demand for this duel — he doesn't express it verbally — are different. His personal honour is wounded since his wife has been unfaithful to him, and Fritz, moreover, refuses to hand over her love letters. Therefore, he must demand retribution and salvage his social standing. The then-current code of honour mandated a duel in such cases and Fritz and the gentleman are both aware of this rule.

Another notable theme of this play is the exposure of class differences. The "Lady in Black" comes from

Fritz's social class, while Christine belongs to the lower middle class. Women of this class would feel the need to find a well-to-do husband that could support them. When Fritz visits Christine at her home for the first time shortly before he goes to the duel, he crosses the line of class division. It seems as if he has deeper feelings for Christine, as he becomes aware of the superficiality of his own social class. He cannot, however, agree with Christine's ideal of love, namely a love for eternity. He lives solely for the moment, and only in the moment is a claim to eternity valid (albeit only as an illusion).

K. K. Hof=Burgtheater.

Mittwoch den 9. Oktober 1895.

206. Vorstellung im Jahres-Abonnement.

Zum ersten Mal:

Rechte der Seele

Schauspiel in einem Akt von Giuseppe Giacosa. Deutsch von Otto Eisenschitz.

Paul	—	Hr. Hartmann.
Anna, seine Frau	—	Fr. Hohenfels.
Marius, sein Bruder	—	Hr. Kraftel.
Johanna, Magd	—	Fr. Kratz.

Ort der Handlung: Eine Villa auf dem Lande. — Zeit: Die Gegenwart

Zum ersten Mal:

Liebelei

Schauspiel in drei Akten von Arthur Schnitzler.

Hans Weiring, Violinspieler an einem Vorstadttheater	—	Hr. Sonnenthal.
Christine, seine Tochter	—	Frl. Adele Sandrock.
Mizi Schlager, Modistin	—	Frl. Kallina.
Katharina Binder, Frau eines Strumpfwirkers	—	Frl. Walbeck.
Lina, ihre 9jährige Tochter	—	Camilla Gerzhofer.
Fritz Lobheimer, junge Leute	—	Hr. Kutschera.
Theodor Kaiser, junge Leute	—	Hr. Zeska.
Ein Herr —	—	Hr. Mitterwurzer.
Ein Diener —	—	Hr. Slanar.

Ort der Handlung: Wien. — Zeit: Die Gegenwart.

Zwischen dem ersten und zweiten Stück größere Pause.

Der freie Eintritt ist heute ohne Ausnahme aufgehoben.

Kassa-Eröffnung 6 Uhr. Anfang 7 Uhr. Ende vor halb 10 Uhr.

Unpäßlich: Fr. Mitterwurzer. Fr. Wolter. Hr. Gabillon. Hr. Robert. Hr. Stätter.

Donnerstag den 10. Rechte der Seele. Liebelei.
Freitag den 11. Don Carlos.
Samstag den 12. Rechte der Seele. Liebelei.

Sonntag den 13. Mittags halb 2 Uhr: König Richard II.
Abends: Die Karlsschüler.
Montag den 14. Schach dem König.
Dinstag den 15. Rechte der Seele. Liebelei.

Falls eine angekündigte Vorstellung **abgeändert** werden sollte, kann von den für dieselbe gelösten Karten auch zur Ersatzvorstellung Gebrauch gemacht, oder der dafür entrichtete Betrag, jedoch **spätestens am Tage der Vorstellung bis halb 7 Uhr abends** (resp. eine halbe Stunde vor dem für Beginn der Vorstellung angesetzten Zeitpunkt) **bei sonstigem Verlust des Anspruches** an der Kasse zurückverlangt werden.

Zu jeder im Repertoire angekündigten Vorstellung erfolgt **Tags vorher** bis 1 Uhr Nachmittags die Ausgabe der Stammsitze; um halb 2 Uhr Nachmittags **(Tags vorher)** beginnt der allgemeine Verkauf von Logen und Sitzen.

Zum Dienstgebrauche.

K. k. Hoftheater-Dr

Playbill for the premiere of "Liebelei" at the Burgtheater in Vienna on 9 October, 1895

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CHARACTERS
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Burgtheater, Vienna

CHARACTERS



Hans Vyring, violinist at the city theatre
Christine, his daughter
Toni Schlager, milliner
Catherine Binder, wife of a stocking-maker
Lena, her nine-year-old daughter
Fritz Loheimer, young man
Theodore Kaiser, young man
A Gentleman

The action takes place in Vienna at the present day

ACT ONE



FRITZ'S ROOM. COZY but elegantly furnished.

Theodore. (Enters in advance. He carries a stick, has an overcoat flung over his arm; takes off his hat upon entering.)

Fritz. (Outside.) So nobody has been here?

Voice. No, sir.

Fritz. (Entering.) I suppose we might let the carriage go?

Theodore. Of course. I thought you had.

Fritz. (Goes to the door.) Send the carriage away. And... you can go, too. I don't need you any more. *(Returning.)* Why don't you lay down your things?

Theodore. (At the desk.) Here are a couple of letters. *(Throws coat and hat on a chair, keeps his stick.)*

Fritz. (Hastens to the desk.) Oh!...

Theodore. Now, now!... I believe you're frightened!

Fritz. From dad.... *(Opens a second letter.)* From Lensky.

Theodore. Don't let me disturb you.

Fritz. (Skims the letters.)

Theodore. What does your father say?

Fritz. Nothing special.... He wants me to spend a week on the estate at Whitsuntide.

Theodore. Excellent plan. I'd like to send you there for six months.

Fritz. (Turns to face him.)

Theodore. I certainly would! — riding, driving, fresh air, dairy-maids —

Fritz. Idiot, there aren't any dairy-farms out there.

Theodore. Well, you know what I mean, don't you?

Fritz. Will you come along?

Theodore. You know I can't.

Fritz. Why not?

Theodore. My dear fellow, I have my doctor's exam, coming! If I went along, it would be only for the sake of keeping you there.

Fritz. Oh, come, you needn't worry about

Theodore. You see, all you need is fresh air; I'm convinced of that — I saw that today. Out yonder in the open where we found the genuine green springtime, you Were a very pleasant fellow again.

Fritz. Thanks.

Theodore. And now — now of course you are collapsing. We're too close to the dangerous atmospheric zone again.

Fritz. (Makes a gesture of irritation.)

Theodore. Why, you've no idea how jolly you were out there. You were actually reasonable for once; it was like the good old days. And then a couple of days ago, when we were out with those two jolly little girls, you were very nice; but now — that's all over again, and you find it absolutely necessary to think — *(With ironical pathos.)* — of that woman.

Fritz. (Rises, vexed.)

Theodore. You don't know me, my dear fellow. I don't intend to stand that any longer.

Fritz. My goodness, but you're ambitious!

Theodore. Oh, I don't demand of you that you forget — *(as before)* — that woman... I only hope — *(warmly)* — my dear Fritz, that this miserable affair, that keeps me trembling for you all the time, means no more to you than any trivial love affair... Look here, Fritz, some day, when you stop worshipping "that woman," you'll be surprised how congenial she is to you. Then you'll find out that there's nothing demoniac in her at all, but that she is a very sweet little woman — one that you can have plenty of fun with, just as you can with all women that are young and pretty, and that have a little temperament.

Fritz. Why do you say "tremble for me"?

Theodore. You know why.... I must confess that I am in constant terror that you will run off with her some fine day.

Fritz. That was what you meant?

Theodore. (After a short pause.) That isn't the only danger.

Fritz. Right you are, Theodore — there are others, too.

Theodore. But then we never do anything silly.

Fritz. (To himself.) There are others, too....

Theodore. What's the matter?... You're thinking of something in particular.

Fritz. Oh, no, I'm not... *(Glances at the window.)* She was deceived once before.

Theodore. What?... What's that?... I don't understand you.

Fritz. Oh, nothing.

Theodore. What? Do talk sense.

Fritz. She's been afraid lately... at times.

Theodore. Why? — There must be a reason for it.

Fritz. Not at all. Nervousness — *(ironically)* — an uneasy conscience, if you will.

Theodore. You say she was deceived once —

Fritz. Well, yes — and again to-day, I suppose.

Theodore. To-day — well, what does all this mean?

Fritz. (After a slight pause.) She thinks... we are watched.

Theodore. What?

Fritz. She sees apparitions; really, she has actual hallucinations. *(At the window.)*
She sees some person standing on the street corner,.. through the crack in the curtain, and thinks — *(Breaks off.)* Is it possible, anyway, to recognize a face at this distance?

Theodore. Scarcely.

Fritz. Why, that's what I say. But then that's terrible. She's afraid to go out; she has all sorts of queer feelings; she gets hysterical; she wants to die with me —

Theodore. Of course.

Fritz. (Short pause.) To-day I had to go down and take a look. Went down as cheerfully as if I were leaving the house alone; of course then' wasn't a familiar face to be seen anywhere....
Theodore, *(Is silent.)*

Fritz. Well, that ought to set fears at rest, oughtn't it? A man can't suddenly be swallowed up by the earth, hey?...Answer, can't you?..

Theodore. What sort of an answer do you want? Of course a man can't be swallowed up. But a man can hide inside the gates.

Fritz. I looked behind them all.

Theodore. You must have looked very innocent at that.

Fritz. There was nobody there. I tell you it's hallucinations.

Theodore. Certainly. But it ought to teach you to be more careful.

Fritz. And I couldn't have helped knowing it, if he suspected it. Why, I ate supper with them yesterday after the play — with him and her — and it was so pleasant I... ridiculous, I tell you!

Theodore. I beg of you Fritz, be sensible; do me that favor. Give up this whole cursed affair, for my sake, if nothing else. I have nerves, too... I know you're not the kind of man who can escape from such an affair unaided, and so I made it so easy for you — gave you a chance to save yourself by starting another...

Fritz. You did?

Theodore. Well, didn't I take you along with me when I had an appointment with little Miss Toni a while back? And didn't I ask her to bring along her prettiest friend?
And can you deny that you like her?

Fritz. Certainly, she is sweet!... So sweet! And you have no idea how I longed for such an affection as that, so sweet and quiet, that would hover about me and soothe me, and help me to recover from these everlasting irritations and torments.

Theodore. That's exactly it. Recover! That's the deeper purpose of it. They help us to recover. That's why I'm against these so-called interesting women. It's not the business of women to be interesting, but to be agreeable. You must seek happiness where I have sought and found it — where there are no grand scenes, no dangers, no tragic entanglements — where the beginning has no special difficulties, and the ending no torments — where you take your first kiss with a smile, and part with very gentle emotion.

Fritz. Yes, that's it.

Theodore. Those women are so happy in their healthy every-day womanhood — what compels us to make demons or angels out of them at all cost?

Fritz. She is really a treasure. So affectionate, so dear. Often it seems to me she is too dear for me.

Theodore. You're incorrigible, apparently.
If you intend to take that affair seriously again....

Fritz. No, no, not a thought of it. We are agreed, I need to recover.

Theodore. If you did, I'd give you up for good. I've had enough of your lovetragedies. You bore me with them. And if you feel like coming at me with your famous "conscience," I'll give you my simple rule for treating such cases: Better it were I than some one else. For that "some one else" is as sure as fate itself.

(There is a ring.)

Fritz. What's that now?...

Theodore. Go and see. There you are, all pale again! Set your fears at rest. It's the two sweet little girls.

Fritz. (Agreeably surprised.) What?

Theodore. I took the liberty of inviting them here to-day.

Fritz. (Going out.) Oh, you — why didn't you tell me? Now I've sent away my man.

Theodore. So much the cozier.

Fritz. (Outside.) Greetings, Toni.

Toni. (Enters, carrying a package.)

Fritz. (Re-enters behind her.) And where's Christine?

Toni. She'll be here soon. Greetings, Dore.

Theodore. (Kisses her hand.)

Toni. You'll have to excuse us, Mr. Fritz; but Theodore invited us....

Fritz. Why, it was a splendid idea. Only he forgot something, Theodore did.

Theodore. Theodore forgot nothing!
(Takes the package from Toni.) Did you bring everything I wrote down for you?

Toni. Of course. *(To Fritz.)* Where can I put it?

Fritz. Just give it to me, Toni; we'll put it on the sideboard for the present.

Toni. I bought something else, Dore, besides what you told me.

Fritz. Give me your hat, Toni, that's right. *(Lays it on the piano, also her boa.)*

Theodore. (Dubiously.) What?

Toni. A coffee cream-cake.

Theodore. Oh, what a sweet tooth!

Fritz. Well, but tell me, why didn't Christine come with you?

Toni. She's going to take her father to the theatre first. Then she'll come along on the street car.

Theodore. What an affectionate daughter!...

Toni. I should say so, and especially since he went into mourning.

Theodore. Why, who died there, anyway?

Toni. The old gentleman's sister.

Theodore. Ah, a widow?

Toni. No, it was an old maiden lady, who has lived with them always. Well, and so he feels so lonesome, somehow.

Theodore. He's a little man with short gray hair — her father — isn't he?

Toni. (Shakes her head.) No, he has long hair.

Fritz. How do you come to know him?

Theodore. Recently I was in the theatre with Lensky, and I took a look at the men playing the bass-viols.

Toni. Why, he doesn't play the bassviol — he plays the violin.

Theodore. Oh, is that so? I thought he played the bass-viol. *(Toni laughs.)* Nothing funny about that; how should I know, child?

Toni. What a beautiful place you have, Mr. Fritz — just wonderful! What view is that?

Fritz. This window opens on Straw Lane, and in the next room ——

Theodore. (Quickly.) Do tell me, why are you so formal, you two?

Toni. At supper we'll get better acquainted.

Theodore. A lady of principle, I see.
Well, that's some comfort, just the same.
How's your mother, anyhow?

Toni. (Turns to him, her face suddenly showing concern.) Only think, she's got —

Theodore. Toothache, I know, I know. Your mother always has the toothache. She ought to go to a dentist one of these times.

Toni. But the doctor says it's only rheumatic pains.

Theodore. (Laughing.) Well, if it's rheumatic...

Toni. (An album in her hand.) Nothing but pretty things. *(Turning the pages.)*
Who is that?... Why, that's you, Mr. Fritz,.. in uniform? You're in the army?

Fritz. Yes.

Toni. Dragoon! — Are you in the yellows or the blacks?

Fritz. (Smiling.) In the yellows.

Toni. (As in a reverie.) The yellows.

Theodore. There she goes a-dreaming.
Wake up, Toni!

Toni. But now you're lieutenant in the reserves?

Fritz. Surely.

Toni. You must look very nice in the fur cap.

Theodore. How much she knows about it!
— Look here, Toni, I'm in the army, too.

Toni. Are you in the dragoons, too?

Theodore. Yes.

Toni. Well, why can't you tell a body that?

Theodore. I want to be loved for myself.

Toni. Come, Dore, you must put on your uniform some time when we're going out together.

Theodore. In August' there will be manoeuvres, anyway.

Toni. Heavens! by August.

Theodore. Yes, that's so — eternal love doesn't last that long.

Toni. Who thinks about August in May? Isn't that so, Mr. Fritz? — Say, Mr. Fritz, why did you run away from us yesterday?

Fritz. What do you mean?

Toni. Why — after the play.

Fritz. Didn't Theodore make my excuses to you?

Theodore. To be sure, I excused you.

Toni. What good do your excuses do me, or rather Christine? When a man makes a promise, he ought to keep it.

Fritz. I really would rather have gone with you.

Toni. Really?

Fritz. But I couldn't. You saw yourselves I was in a box with friends, and afterward I couldn't get away from them.

Toni. Yes, you couldn't get away from the pretty ladies. Do you think we didn't see you from the gallery?

Fritz. Well, I saw you, too.

Toni. You were sitting backwards in the box.

Fritz. Not all the time.

Toni. But most of it. Behind a lady With a black velvet dress you sat and kept — *(Imitating.)* — looking forward like this.

Fritz. You must have watched me closely.

Toni. Why, it's nothing to me. But if I were Christine... Why did Theodore have time after the play? Why doesn't he have to take supper with friends?

Theodore. (Proudly.) Why don't I have to take supper with friends?
(There is a ring. Fritz hastens out.)

Theodore. Toni, you can do me a favor.

Toni. (Assumes questioning expression.)

Theodore. Forget your military recollections — at least, for a time.

Toni. Why, I haven't any.

Theodore. Come, now, you didn't learn all that just by accident, that's plain enough.

Christine. (Enters with flowers in her hand. Fritz behind her. With a trace of embarrassment.) Good-evening. *(General salutation. To Fritz.)* Are you glad we came — You're not angry?

Fritz. But — my dear child! Sometimes, you know Theodore is cleverer than I am.

Theodore. Well, is your father fiddling by now?

Christine. Surely; I took him to the theatre.

Fritz. Toni told us.

Christine. (To Toni.) And Catherine stopped me, too.

Toni. Oh, pshaw! the false cat!

Christine. Oh, no, she isn't false at all; she is very good to me.

Toni. You trust every one, anyway.

Christine. Why should she be false to me?

Fritz. Who is Catherine?

Toni. The wife of a stocking-maker; and she's always vexed because some girls are younger than she is.

Christine. Why, she's quite young herself.

Fritz. Bother Catherine! — What have you got there?

Christine. I brought along a few flowers for you.

Fritz. (Takes them from her and kisses her hand.) You're a little angel. Here, we'll put them in the vase.

Theodore. No, no! You've no talent as decorator. The flowers will be scattered at random on the table —— That is, later on, when the table is set. We really ought to fix it so that they would fall from the ceiling. But that can't be done.

Fritz. (Laughing.) Scarcely.

Theodore. Meanwhile we'll put them in here, after all. *(Puts them into the vase.)*

Toni. Children, it's getting dark!

Fritz. (Helps Christine to take off her coat, and she takes off her hat. He puts hat and coat on a chair in the background.)
We'll light the lamp right away.

Theodore. Lamp! I should say not! Candles we must have. Their light is so much prettier. Come, Toni, you can help me.

(He and Toni light the candles, in the branched candelabra before the pierglass, one on the desk, two candles on the sideboard. Meanwhile Fritz and Christine converse.)

Fritz. How are you, sweetheart?

Christine. I'm all right now.

Fritz. Well, but not at other times?

Christine. I have longed so for you.

Fritz. Why, we saw each other only yesterday.

Christine. Saw each other... from away off.... (Shyly.) Fritz, it wasn't very nice of you to...

Fritz. Yes, I know; Toni told me. But you're always a child. I couldn't get away.
You've got to understand such things.

Christine. Yes.... Fritz,.. who were the people in the box?

Fritz. Friends of mine — it doesn't matter what their names are.

Christine. Well, who was the lady in the black velvet dress?

Fritz. Child, I have no memory for dresses.

Christine. (Coaxingly.) Come, come!

Fritz. That is to say,.. I do have a sort of a memory for them — in certain cases. For example, I remember very well that dark-blue waist you had on the first time we saw each other. And the black and white one you wore to the theatre yesterday.

Christine. Why, I'm wearing it to-day!

Fritz. Sure enough;... from the distance, you know, it looks different — I mean it! Oh, and that medallion — I know that, too.

Christine. (Smiling.) When did I wear that?

Fritz. Oh, — that time we went walking in the public gardens, where all the children Were playing — isn't that right?

Christine. Yes... So you do think of me 'sometimes?

Fritz. Rather frequently, my child.

Christine. Not so often as I think of you.
I am always thinking of you... all day long;... and I can only be happy when I see you.

Fritz. Then don't we see each other often enough?

Christine. Often...

Fritz. Certainly. In the summer we shan't see each other so much. Just think!
Suppose, for example, I went away for a couple of weeks — what would you say?

Christine. (Anxiously.) What? You are going away?

Fritz. No.... And still it might be possible that I would like the notion of being all alone for a week.

Christine. Oh, why?

Fritz. I'm simply talking about possibilities. I know myself, I get such notions.
And you, too, might some time take the whim of not wanting to see me for a few days.... I'll always understand that.

Christine. No, I'll never have that whim, Fritz.

Fritz. You can't tell about that.

Christine. But I can.... I love you.

Fritz. I love you, too, very much.

Christine. But you are everything to me, Fritz; for you I could — (Breaks off.) No, I can't imagine an hour ever coming when I wouldn't want to see you. As long as I live, Fritz —

Fritz. (Interrupts.) Child, I beseech you... don't say anything like that.... I don't like big words. We won't talk about eternity.

Christine. (Smiling sadly.) Have no fear, Fritz.... I know this can't be for always.

Fritz. You misunderstand me, child. Of course it's possible — (Laughing.) — that we simply won't be able to live without each other, but we can't tell for sure, can we?
We're only human.

Theodore. (Pointing to the lighted candles.) Kindly turn your eyes upon that... Isn't that different from a stupid lamp?

Fritz. You're really a born decorator.

Theodore. Children, what do you say — shall we think about eating?

Toni. Yes!... Come, Christine.

Fritz. Wait; I'll show you where to find everything.

Toni. First of all, we need a table-cloth.

*Theodore. (With German accent, as on the vaudeville stage.! "*A table-clot'?"

Fritz. What?

Theodore. Don't you remember that fellow in the Orpheum? "Dot is a table-clot'."
"Dot is a shtool."
"Dot is a liddle piannino."

Toni. Say, Dore, when are you going to the Orpheum with me? You promised me a little while ago. Then Christine will come along, and Mr. Fritz, too. *(She is just taking from Fritz the table-cloth which he has taken out of the sideboard.)* Then we'll be your friends in the box.

Fritz. Yes, yes.

Toni. Then the lady with the black velvet dress can go home alone.

Fritz. Why do you keep thinking about that lady in black? It's too stupid.

Toni. Oh, we don't think about her....

There.... And the silver? *(Fritz shows her the things in the open sideboard.)* Yes... And the plates?... Yes, thanks.... There, now we can do it alone all right. Go, go away now, you're only getting in our way.

Theodore. (Has meanwhile stretched out on the couch; Fritz advances toward him.)

You'll excuse me.

Toni. Did you see the picture of Fritz in his uniform?

Christine. No.

Toni. You must have a look at it. Swell!
(They talk on.)

Theodore. Such evenings are my delight, Fritz.

Fritz. Well, they are nice.

Theodore. Then I feel so cozy.... Don't you?

Fritz. Oh, I wish I could always feel so contented.

Toni. Tell me, Mr. Fritz, is there coffee in the machine?

Fritz. Yes. You can start the lamp under it right away — it takes a good hour on that machine, before the coffee is done.

Theodore. I'd give a dozen demoniac women for a sweet girl like that.

Fritz. There's no comparison.

Theodore. You see, we hate the women that we love — and only love the women that are indifferent to us.

Fritz. (Laughs.)

Toni. What's the joke? We'd like to hear it, too.

Theodore. Nothing for you, children. We're philosophizing — If this were to be our last meeting with these girls, we'd be just as jolly, wouldn't we?

Fritz. The last time?... Well, there's certainly something melancholy about that.
Parting always gives pain, even if you've been looking forward to it eagerly for a long time.

Christine. Say, Fritz, where's the small silver?

Fritz. (Goes rear to the sideboard.) Here it is, sweetheart.

Toni. (Comes forward, runs her hand through Theodore's hair; he still reclining on the couch.)

Theodore. You pussy-cat!

Fritz. (Opens the package Toni brought.) Grand!

Christine. (To Fritz.) You have everything in such good order.

Fritz. Yes. *(Arranges the things. Toni brought — sardines, cold meat, butter, cheese.)*

Christine. Fritz... won't you tell me?

Fritz. Tell you what?

Christine. (Very timidly.) Who the lady was.

Fritz. No; don't make me cross. *(More gently.)* You see, that's one thing we agreed upon expressly: No questions asked. That's the nice thing about it. When I am with you the world disappears, like that — *(Snaps his fingers.)* I don't ask you any questions, either.

Christine. You can ask me anything you like.

Fritz. But I don't. I don't want to know anything.

Toni. (Returns to table.) Goodness, what a mess you're making! *(Takes the edibles, puts them on the plates.)* There....

Theodore. Say, Fritz, have you anything to drink here?

Fritz. Oh, yes, I think I can find something. *(Exit into front room.)*

Theodore. (Raises himself and inspects the table.) Good.

Toni. There, I think we've got everything now.

Fritz. (Returns with some bottles.) Here's something to drink, too.

Theodore. Where are the roses that fall from the ceiling?

Toni. That's right, we forgot the roses.
(She takes the roses out of the vase, climbs on a chair, and lets the roses fall on the table.) There!

Christine. My, what a wild girl you are to-night!

Theodore. Here, not on the plates.

Fritz. Where do you want to sit, Christine?

Theodore. Where is the cork-screw?

Fritz. (Gets one from the sideboard.)
Here is one.

Toni. (Tries to open a bottle.)

Fritz. No, let me do that.

Theodore. No, let me do it.... *(Takes bottle and cork-screw from him.)* Meanwhile you might —— *(Moves his*

fingers as at the piano.)

Toni. Yes, yes, that's grandi... *(She runs to the piano, takes the things off it, and opens it.)*

Fritz. (To Christine.) Shall I?

Christine. Oh, please do, I've wanted that for so long.

Fritz. (At the piano.) You can play a little too?

Christine. (With a gesture.) Oh goodness.

Toni. She plays fine, Christine does.... she can sing too.

Fritz. Really? You never told me that.

Christine. Did you ever ask me?

Fritz. Where did you learn to sing?

Christine. I really never learned. Father taught me a little — but I haven't got much voice. And you know, since auntie died, the one that always lived with us, it's even quieter at home than it was before.

Fritz. What do you do, anyway, all day long?

Christine. Oh, I have plenty to do!

Fritz. Around the house, I suppose?

Christine. Yes. And then I copy notes quite a lot.

Theodore. Music notes?

Christine. Surely.

Theodore. They must pay you tremendously for that. *(The others laugh.)* Well, I'd pay tremendously for it. Music copying must be a terrible task, I think.

Toni. There's no sense in her working so hard, either. If I had as much voice as you have, I'd have been in the theatre long ago.

Theodore. You wouldn't even need a voice.... Of course you do nothing all day, hey?

Toni. Well, I like that! I have two little brothers that are going to school. I have to dress them in the morning. And then I help them with their lessons —

Theodore. That's a lie, every word of it.

Toni. Well, if you won't believe me. And until last autumn I was in a store from eight in the morning till eight at night.

Theodore. (Mockingly.) Where was that?

Toni. In a millinery store. Mother wants me to go back there.

Theodore. (As above.) Why did you leave it?

Fritz. (To Christine.) Then you must sing something for us.

Theodore. Come on, children, let's eat first, and then you'll play, won't you?

Fritz. (Rising, to Christine.) Come, sweetheart. *(Leads her to the table.)*

Toni. The coffee! There's the coffee boiling over, and we haven't begun to eat.

Theodore. Nothing matters now.

Toni. But it's boiling over! *(Blows out the flame.)*
(All sit down at the table.)

Theodore. What will you have, Toni? But let me tell you this: the cake comes last!... First you've got to eat nothing but sour things.

Fritz. (Pours out the wine.)

Theodore. Not that way: we do it differently now. Don't you know the latest fashion? *(Stands up, affects magniloquence; to Christine, bottle in hand.)* Special quality, genuine Johannisberger, eighteen hundred — *(Mumbles the last figures. Fills glass, then goes to Toni, to Fritz, repeating the same ceremony and words; finally stands at his own place, and repeats as before.*
Seats himself.)

Toni. (Laughing.) He's always doing something silly.

Theodore. (Raises his glass; all clink.) Prosit.

Toni. Your health, Theodore.

Theodore. (Rising.) Ladies and Gentlemen...

Fritz. Oh, not yet!

Theodore. (Sits again.) Well, I can wait.

Toni. Oh, that's what I like, — after-dinner speeches. I have a cousin that always makes his speeches in rhymes.

Theodore. What regiment is he in?

Toni. Come, stop that... He talks if off by heart and in rhyme, and it's just splendid, Christine. And he's an elderly gentleman now, too.

Theodore. Oh, it sometimes happens that elderly gentlemen can still talk in rhyme.

Fritz. But you're not drinking at all, Christine! *(Clinks with her.)*

Theodore. (Clinks with Toni.) To the old gentleman who talks in rhymes.

Toni. (Merrily.) To the young gentlemen, even if they don't talk at all... for example, to Mr. Fritz.... Say, Mr. Fritz, now we'll drink to our better acquaintance, if you wish — and Christine must do the same with Theodore.

Theodore. But not with this wine, that's not the right kind for it. (Rises, takes another bottle, same ceremony as before.) Xeres de la Frontera mille huit cent cinquante —

Toni. (Sips.) Ah —

Theodore. Can't you wait till we all drink together? Now then, children...Before we solemnly drink to our better acquaintance, let us drink to the happy chance that, that... and so forth...

Toni. Yes, that's enough. *(They drink, Fritz taking Toni's arm, Theodore Christine's.)*

Fritz. (Kisses Toni.)

Theodore. (Starts to kiss Christine.)

Christine. Is that necessary?

Theodore. Absolutely, else the whole ceremony is null.... *(Kisses her.)* There, and now to your seats I...

Toni. But it's getting terribly hot in the room.

Fritz. That's because of all the candles Theodore lit.

Toni. And the wine, too. *(She leans back in her chair.)*

Theodore. Come here, the best of all is coming now. *(He cuts off a slice of the cake and puts it in her mouth.)* There, sweet tooth, — that good?

Toni. Awfully!... *(He gives her another.)*

Theodore. Come, Fritz, now's the time. Now you might play something.

Fritz. Do you want me to, Christine?

Christine. Please do!

Toni. Play something swell.

Theodore. (Fills the glasses.)

Toni. No more. *(Drinks.)*

Christine. (Sipping.) The wine is so heavy.

Theodore. (Pointing to the glass.) Fritz.

Fritz. (Empties the glass, goes to piano.)

Christine. (Goes and sits by him.)

Toni. Mr. Fritz, play the "Double Eagle."

Fritz. The "Double Eagle" — how does it go?

Toni. Dore, can't you play it?

Theodore. I can't play at all.

Fritz. I know the thing; but I can't think of it.

Toni. I'll sing it for you.... La... la... lalalala....

Fritz. Aha, now I know. *(Does not play quite correctly.)* —

Toni. (Goes to the piano.) No, this way. *(Plays the melody with one finger.)*

Fritz. Yes, yes.... *(He plays, Toni sings.)*

Theodore. Recollections again, hey?

Fritz. (Plays wrong again and stops.)
Can't do it. I've got no ear. *(He starts to improvise.)*

Toni. (After the first measure.) That's no good.

Fritz. (Laughs.) Don't say that, I made it up.

Toni. But it's no good for dancing.

Fritz. Just try it once....

Theodore. (To Toni.) Come, let's try.
(They dance.)

Christine. (Sits by the piano and looks at the keys.)
(There is a ring.)

Fritz. (Suddenly stops playing; Theodore and Toni dance on.)

Theodore and Toni. (Together.) What's all this? Come!

Fritz. The bell just rang.... *(To Theodore.)* Did you invite anybody else?

Theodore. I should say not — you don't need to answer the bell.

Christine. (To Fritz.) What's the matter with you?

Fritz. Nothing....
(There is another ring.)

Fritz. (Stands up, rooted to the spot.)

Theodore. You are simply not at home.

Fritz. You can hear the piano out in the corridor.... And you can see from the street that the room is lit.

Theodore. What folly is this? You're simply not at home.

Fritz. But it makes me nervous.

Theodore. Well, what do you suppose it's going to be? A letter — or a telegram —— You're not going to have a visitor at *(Looks at his watch.)* nine o'clock.
(There is another ring.)

Fritz. Rubbish, I must go and see — *(Exit.)*

Toni. But you're not a bit swell — *(Strikes a few keys on the piano.')*

Theodore. Here, stop that now! — *(To Christine.)* What ails you? Does the bell make you nervous too?

Fritz. (Returns, in forced calm.)

Theodore and Christine. (Together.)
Well, who was it? — Who was it?

Fritz. (With a forced smile.) You must be good enough to excuse me for a moment.
Go in there meanwhile.

Theodore. What is it?

Christine. Who is it?

Fritz. Nothing, child, I simply have to say a few words to a gentleman.... *(Fritz has opened the door of the adjoining room, conducts the girls into it. Theodore, going in last, looks questioningly at Fritz.)*

Fritz. (In a low voice, with an expression of horror.) He!

Theodore. Ah!

Fritz. In with you!

Theodore. I beg of you, don't do anything stupid, it may be a trap....

Fritz. Go... go.... *(Theodore exit. Fritz goes rapidly through the room to the corridor, so that the stage is empty for a few seconds. Then he enters again, allowing an elegantly dressed gentleman of about thirty-five years to precede him. The Gentleman wears a yellow mantle, holds his hat in his gloved hand. While entering.)* Pardon me for making you wait.... I beg you....

The Gentleman. (In a very easy tone.)
Oh, that is nothing. I regret extremely to have disturbed you.

Fritz. By no means. Will you not....
(Indicates a chair.)

The Gentleman. Why, I see that I have disturbed you? A little entertainment, I presume?

Fritz. A few friends.

The Gentleman. (Seating himself, amicable.) A masquerade, no doubt?

Fritz. (Embarrassed.) Why do you say that?

The Gentleman. Well, your friends have ladies' hats and cloaks.

Fritz. Well yes.... *(Smiling.)* There may be lady friends among them....
(Silence.)

The Gentleman. Life is at times very merry... yes... *(Looks rigidly at Fritz.)*

Fritz. (Endures the glance a while, then looks away.) I presume I may permit myself to inquire what gives me the pleasure of your visit?

The Gentleman. Certainly.... *(Calmly.)*
You see, my wife forgot to take her veil away from here.

Fritz. Your wife... here? Her...*(Smiling.)* The jest is a trifle strange....

The Gentleman. (Suddenly rising, very loudly, almost wildly, supporting himself by resting one hand on the chair arm.) She did forget it.

Fritz. (Rises also, and the two men stand facing each other.)

The Gentleman. (Raises his clenched fist, as if to launch it at Fritz; in jury and loathing.) Oh!...

Fritz. (Makes a parrying motion, takes a short step backward.)

The Gentleman. (After a long pause.)
Here are your letters. *(He throws on the desk a packet of letters which he has taken from his overcoat pocket.)* I wish those which you have received.

Fritz. (Parrying motion.)

The Gentleman. (Vehemently, significantly.) I do not wish to have them found — later — in your rooms.

Fritz. (Very loudly.) They will not be found.

The Gentleman. (Looks at him. Pause.)

Fritz. What else do you wish of me?

The Gentleman. (Scornfully.) What else?

Fritz. I am at your disposal....

The Gentleman. (Bows coolly.) Very well. *(He casts a glance around the room; as he again sees the table and the girls' hats, a sudden flash crosses his face, as if he would burst into a new fit of rage.)*

Fritz. (Notices this.) I am wholly at your disposal. — I shall be at home to-morrow till noon.

The Gentleman. (Bows and turns to go.)

*Fritz. (*Accompanies him to the door, The Gentleman motioning him away. When he is gone, Fritz goes to the desk and stands there a moment. Then he hastens to the window, looks through a crack in the blind, and can be seen to follow the motions of the gentleman passing along the street. Leaving the window he looks down for a moment; then goes to the door of the adjoining room, opens it halfway, and calls.) Theodore, one moment.

(The following scene very rapid.)

Theodore. (Excited.) Well?...

Fritz. He knows.

Theodore. He knows nothing. You simply fell into his trap. I'll wager you even confessed. You're a fool, I tell you....You

Fritz. (Pointing to the letters.) He brought me back my letters.

Theodore. (Startled.) Oh!... *(After a pause.)* I always say, a man ought not to write letters.

Fritz. It was he, this noon, down below.

Theodore. Well, what happened? — Tell me about it.

Fritz. You must do me a great service now, Theodore.

Theodore. I'll fix up the whole business for you.

Fritz. That is out of the question now.

Theodore. Then...

Fritz. In any case it will be well....
(Breaks off.) — But we can't let the poor girls wait so long.

Theodore. Let them wait. What were you going to say?

Fritz. It will be well if you go to Lensky to-day.

Theodore. At once, if you wish.

Fritz. You won't find him now... but between eleven and twelve he will surely come into the coffee-house... perhaps the two of you will then come here....

Theodore. Come, don't make up such a face... ninety-nine times out of a hundred it turns out all right....

Fritz. He will see to it that this one doesn't turn out all right.

Theodore. But I beg you, remember that affair of last year, between Doctor Billinger and Herz — that was exactly the same.

Fritz. None of that! You know yourself he ought to have shot me down right here in the room — it would have come to the same thing.

Theodore. (Acting.) Well, that is fine, I must say. That's a grand idea.... And so Lensky and I count for nothing? You think we'll agree that...

Fritz. I beg of you, no more of that!... You simply accept what is proposed.

Theodore. Ah, —

Fritz. What's the sense of all this, Theodore? As if you didn't know.

Theodore. Nonsense. And anyway, it's all a matter of luck.... You have just as much chance of...

Fritz. (Without listening to him,) She foreboded it. We both foreboded it. We knew it....

Theodore. Come, Fritz....

Fritz. (Goes to the desk, locks up the letters.) Oh, what is she doing this minute?
Did he... Theodore, you must find out to-morrow what happened over there.

Theodore. I will try.

Fritz. And see to it that no useless delay...

Theodore. It can scarcely be before day after to-morrow in the morning.

Fritz. (Almost horrified.) Theodore!

Theodore. And so... head up. — You believe a little in inward conviction, don't you — and I have a firm conviction that everything will turn out all right. *(With forced merriment.)* I don't know why myself, but I

have the conviction, anyway!

Fritz. (Smiling.) What a good fellow you are. But what shall we say to the girls?

Theodore. That doesn't matter. Let's simply send them away.

Fritz. No, no. Let's be as merry as we can. Christine must not suspect anything. I'll sit down at the piano again; and you call them in. *(Theodore turns to do this, with discontented face.)* And what shall you say to them?

Theodore. That it's none of their business.

Fritz. (Who has sat down at the piano, turning toward him.) No, no ——

Theodore. That it's about a friend — I'll invent something.

Fritz. (Plays a few notes.)

Theodore. Ladies, I beg you to enter.

(Has opened the door.)

Toni. Well, at last! Has he gone?

Christine. (Hastening to Fritz.) Who was here, Fritz?

Fritz. (At the piano, playing.) Curious again.

Christine. I beg you, Fritz, tell me.

Fritz. Sweetheart, I can't tell you; it really concerns people that you don't know at all.

Christine. (Coaxingly.) Come, Fritz, tell me the truth.

Theodore. Of course she won't leave you in peace.... But mind you tell her nothing! You promised him.

Toni. Come, don't be so tiresome, Christine, let them have their fun. They're simply putting on airs.

Theodore. I must finish that waltz with Miss Toni. *(German accent.)* Bleaze, Mister Music-maker — a liddle museek.

Fritz. (Plays.)
(Theodore and Toni dance a few measures.)

Toni. (After a few moments.) I can't. *(She falls back into a chair.)*

Theodore. (Kisses her, seats himself beside her on the chair-arm.)

Fritz. (Stays at the piano, takes both Christine's hands, looks at her.)

Christine. (As if awakening.) Why don't you play on?

Fritz. (Smiling.) Enough for to-day....

Christine. That's the way I'd like to be able to play.

Fritz. Do you play much?

Christine. I don't get much chance; there's always something in the house that needs to be done. And then you know we have such a poor piano.

Fritz. I'd like to try it once. I'd like to see your room once, anyway.

Christine. (Smiling.) It isn't as pretty as here.

Fritz. And something else I'd like: to have you tell me about yourself... a whole lot... I really know so little about you.

Christine. There isn't much to tell. — And I haven't any secrets either... like some others.

Fritz. You never loved any man before?

Christine. (Merely looks at him.)

Fritz. (Kisses her hands.)

Christine. And never shall love any other.

Fritz. (With an almost pained expression.) Don't say that... don't... What do you know, about it?... Does your father love you very much, Christine?

Christine. Oh, how much!... And there was a time when I used to tell him everything.

Fritz. Well, child, don't reproach yourself. People have to have secrets once in a while — that's the way of the world.

Christine. If I only knew that you loved me — it would all be right.

Fritz. Then don't you know?

Christine. If you would always talk to me like that then...

Fritz. Christine! You haven't a very comfortable seat, though.

Christine. Let me be — this is all right.

(She lays her head against the piano.)

Fritz. (Stands up and strokes her hair.)

Christine. Oh, that feels good. *(The room is quiet.)*

Theodore. Where are the cigars, Fritz?

Fritz. (Advances to him as he stands by the sideboard looking.)

Toni. (Has fallen asleep.)

Fritz. (Hands him a small box of cigars.)
And black coffee. *(He pours two cups.)*

Theodore. Children, don't you want some coffee, too?

Fritz. Toni, shall I pour a cup?...

Theodore. Let them sleep. — You ought not to drink coffee to-day. You ought to go to bed as soon as possible and try to sleep well.

Fritz. (Looks at him and laughs bitterly.)

Theodore. Well, things are as they are... and now it's not a question of being magnificent or deep, but of being as sensible as you can... that's the point... in such cases.

Fritz. You'll bring Lensky to me to-night, will you?

Theodore. That's nonsense. To-morrow is time enough.

Fritz. I beg you, bring him.

Theodore. All right, then.

Fritz. Will you take the girls home?

Theodore. Yes, and right away, too. —
Toni!... Get up!

Toni. Oh, you're drinking black coffee.
Give me some, too.

Theodore. Here you are, child.

Fritz. (To Christine, going to her.)
Tired, my sweetheart?

Christine. How sweet, when you talk that way.

Fritz. Very tired?

Christine. (Smiling.) It's the wine. — And I have a little headache, too.

Fritz. Well, that will pass off in the open air.

Christine. Are we going now? Will you go with us?

Fritz. No, child. I'm going to stay right here. I have some things to do.

Christine. (Recollecting.) Now... What have you got to do now?

Fritz. (Almost sternly.) Christine, that's something you must stop. — *(Gently.)* You see, I'm all used up... we walked around in the country for two hours to-day, Theodore and I.

Theodore. Oh, that was delightful. One of these days we'll all drive out into the country together.

Toni. Yes, that will be swell. And you'll put on your uniform.

Theodore. There's feeling for nature!

Christine. When shall I see you again?

Fritz. (Somewhat nervously.) I'll write you.

Christine. (Sadly.) Good-bye. *(Turns to go.)*

Fritz. (Notices her sadness.) To-morrow, Christine.

Christine. (Happily.) Truly?

Fritz. In the public gardens out there — at — say at six o'clock.... Will that suit you?

Christine. (Nods.)

Toni. (To Fritz.) Are you going with us, Fritz?

Fritz. No, I shall stay here.

Toni. He has an easy time of it. Think of the long journey home we have.

Fritz. But Toni, you have left almost the whole of that cake. Wait, I'll wrap it up for you, shall I?

Toni. (To Theodore.) Is that proper?

Fritz. (Wraps up the cake.)

Christine. She's like a little child.

Toni. (To Fritz.) Wait, I'll help you put out the candles. *(Puts out one after another.)* The candle on the desk is left burning.

Christine. Shan't I open the window for you? The air is so heavy. *(She opens the window, looks at the house opposite.)*

Fritz. There, children. Now I'll light you down the stairs.

Toni. Are the lights out on the stairs?

Theodore. Why, of course.

Christine. Oh, the air is nice, coming in here.

Toni. May breezes.... *(At the door to Fritz, who holds the candlestick.)* Well, we thank you for a warm welcome.

Theodore. (Urging her forward.) Come, come, come, come....

Fritz. (Goes out with them. The door stays open. The voices are heard outside.
The outer door is heard to open.)

Toni. Bah!

Theodore. Look out for the steps there.

Toni. Thanks for the cake.

Theodore. Shh, you'll wake people up.

Christine. Good night.

Theodore. Good night.

(Fritz can be heard to close and bolt the outer door. As he enters and puts the light on the desk, the street-door is heard to open and close.)

Fritz. (Goes to the window and bows, looking down.)

Christine. Good night.

Toni. (In high spirits.) Good night, my darling child.

Theodore. (Reprovingly.) Toni! (One can hear his words, her laughter; the steps die away. Theodore whistles the melody of the "Double Eagle," which is the last thing heard. Fritz looks out a few moments longer, then sinks down on the chair nearest the window.)

ACT TWO



CHRISTINE'S ROOM. MODEST and neat.

Christine. (Is dressing to go out.)

Catherine. (Enters after knocking.) Good evening, Miss Christine.

Christine. (Standing before the mirror, turns around.) Good evening.

Catherine. You're just going out?

Christine. I'm not in such a great hurry.

Catherine. My husband sent me to ask if you wouldn't go and take supper with us in the Zoological Garden; there's a band there to-night.

Christine. Thank you very much, Mrs.

Binder. I can't to-night. Another time, perhaps? — But you're not angry?

Catherine. Not a bit, why should I be?
You'll probably have a better time than with us.

Christine. (Looks at her.)

Catherine. Has your father gone to the theatre?

Christine. Oh, no; he comes home first. It doesn't begin till half past seven now.

Catherine. That's so, I keep forgetting. I'll just wait for him. I've wanted for a long time to ask him about free tickets to the new piece. I suppose they can be had now?

Christine. Surely, nobody goes there any more now, when the evenings are so lovely.

Catherine. People like us never get a chance to go, unless we happen to know somebody in a theatre. — But don't let me keep you, Miss Christine, if you have to go. To be sure, my husband will be very sorry... and somebody else too.

Christine. Who?

Catherine. Binder's cousin goes with us, of course. Do you know, Miss Christine, that he has a steady job now?

Christine. (Indifferently.) Oh.

Catherine. And a very nice salary. And such a fine young fellow. And he has such respect for you —

Christine. Well — good-bye, Mrs. Binder.

Catherine. A body could tell him anything about you — he wouldn't believe a word of it....

Christine. (Looks at her.)

Catherine. There are such men.

Christine. Good-bye, Mrs. Binder.

Catherine. Good-bye.... *(Not too maliciously.)* See that you aren't late to your appointment, Miss Christine.

Christine. What do you want of me, anyway?

Catherine. Why, nothing; you're quite right. You can't be young but once.

Christine. Good-bye.

Catherine. But I'd like to give you one piece of advice, just the same, Miss Christine: you ought to be a little more careful.

Christine. Why, what do you mean?

Catherine. Look, — Vienna is such a big city.... Do you have to have your meetings a hundred paces from your house?

Christine. I suppose that's nobody's business.

Catherine. I didn't want to believe it, when Binder told me. He saw you, you know.... Come, I said to him, you were mistaken, you saw somebody else. Miss Christine is not the girl to go walking with elegant young gentlemen in the evening, and if she did, she would be wise enough not to go walking through these streets. Well, says he, you can ask her yourself. And, says he, it's no wonder, either — she doesn't come to see us any more at all. Instead of that she's going around all the time with Toni Schlager, and what sort of company is that for a decent young girl? — You see, men are so low-minded, Miss Christine. — And of course he had to go and tell everything to Franz right away too; but he got fine and angry, he did, and for Miss Christine he'd burn his hand off, and anybody that said anything about her would have to deal with him. And you're so domestic and were always so sweet with your old auntie — God grant her eternal rest — and you live so modestly and so retiringly and all that.... *(Pause.)* Perhaps you'll come to hear the music, after all?

Christine. No....

Vyring. (Enters, a laurel branch in his hand.) Good evening. — Ah, Mrs. Binder.
How are you?

Catherine. Thank you, well.

Vyring. And little Lena? And your husband?

Catherine. All well, God be praised.

Vyring. Well, that's fine. *(To Christine.)* You're still at home in all this fine weather?

Christine. I was just going out.

Vyring. That's right. The air outside, — it's something wonderful, eh, Mrs. Binder?
I just came through the public gardens; the lilacs are in bloom, simply gorgeous. I broke the law a little, too.
(Gives the branch to Christine.)

Christine. Thank you, father.

Catherine. Thank your lucky stars that the guard didn't catch you.

Vyring. Just go out there once, Mrs.

Binder. It smells just as good as if I hadn't plucked the little twig.

Catherine. But if everybody thought the same —

Vyring. Well, that would be a mistake, to be sure.

Christine. Good-bye, father.

Vyring. If you could wait a few minutes, you might go to the theatre with me.

Christine. I... I promised Toni that I would go for her....

Vyring. Oh, yes. Well, that's wiser, too. Youth belongs with youth. Good-bye,

Christine.

Christine. (Kisses him.) Good-bye, Mrs.

Binder. (Exit. Vyring's eyes follow her tenderly.)

Catherine. That's a very close friendship with her and Miss Toni.

Vyring. Yes — I'm really glad that she has such company and doesn't have to sit at home all the time. What sort of a life does that girl have, anyway?

Catherine. Yes, to be sure.

Vyring. I can't tell you, Mrs. Binder, how it hurts me sometimes when I come home from rehearsal and find her sitting there and sewing; and then we've scarcely got up from the table at noon when she sits down again and goes to copying notes.

Catherine. Yes, yes, the millionaires have an easier time of it, to be sure, than we do.
But how about her singing?

Vyring. It's not much. Her voice is big enough for a room, and her singing is good enough for her father — but you can't live on that.

Catherine. That's too bad.

Vyring. I am glad she sees it herself.
She at least will be spared from disappointments. Of course I could get her into the chorus in our theatre.

Catherine. Of course, with such a figure!

Vyring. But there's no future there.

Catherine. A girl brings really a good many cares. When I think that in five or six years my little Lena will be a grown girl too —

Vyring. But why don't you sit down, Mrs. Binder?

Catherine. Oh, thanks; my husband is coming for me right away — I only came to invite Christine.

Vyring. Invite?...

Catherine. Yes, to hear the band in the Zoological Gardens. I thought that might cheer her up a bit. She really needs it.

Vyring. Couldn't do her a bit of harm, especially after this sad winter. Why doesn't she go with you?

Catherine. I don't know.... Perhaps because Binder's cousin is with us.

Vyring. Ah, that's possible. You know she can't stand him. She told me that herself.

Catherine. Well, why not? Franz is a very decent fellow — and now he's even got a steady job, and that's a piece of good fortune nowadays for a...

Vyring. For a... poor girl —

Catherine. For any girl.

Vyring. Now, tell me, Mrs. Binder, is a blooming young creature like that really made for nothing but for some such decent fellow who happens to have a steady job?

Catherine. Why, that's the best thing, after all. You can't wait for a count, and when one happens to come along, he usually takes his leave before he's married you.
(Vyring is at the window. Pause.) Well, and that's why I always say you can't be careful enough of a young girl, especially of the company she keeps.

Vyring. Well, I wonder if it's worth while to throw away all your young years like that. — And what good does all her goodness do a poor creature like that, even if, after years of waiting, the stockingmaker actually comes? —

Catherine. Mr. Vyring, if my husband is a stocking-maker, he is an honest and good man, that I've never had to complain of....

Vyring. (Soothingly.) Why, Mrs. Binder, do you think I'm aiming at you?...
You didn't fling your youth out of the window, either.

Catherine. I have forgotten all about that.

Vyring. Don't say that. — You can say what you like, memories are, after all, the best thing in your life.

Catherine. I haven't any memories.

Vyring. Now, now....

Catherine. And if a body does have such memories as you mean, what remains behind?... Regret.

Vyring. Well, and what remains behind — if she — doesn't even have anything to remember? If her whole life simply goes by *(Simply and without emotion.)*, day after day, without happiness or love — I suppose you think that's better?

Catherine. But, Mr. Vyring, just think of the old lady, of your sister.... But it still pains you to have her spoken of, Mr. Vyring.

Vyring. It still pains me, yes.

Catherine. Of course... when two people have clung to each other so warmly... I always said that brothers like you aren't found every day.

Vyring. (Makes a gesture of deprecation.)

Catherine. Well, it's true. You had to be both father and mother to her, and such a young man.

Vyring. Yes, yes —

Catherine. And that must be a kind of consolation, too. Then you know that you have been the benefactor and the protector of a poor girl like that —

Vyring. Yes, I imagined that, too — when she was still a pretty young girl — and God knows how clever and noble I thought myself. But then, later on, when the gray hairs came and the wrinkles, and one day passed like all the others — and her whole youth — and the girl gradually *(you scarcely notice such things)* turned into the old maid — then for the first time I began to see what I had done.

Catherine. But Mr. Vyring —

Vyring. I still see her before me, as she often used to sit opposite me in the evening, sitting by the lamp here in the room, and used to look at me with her quiet smile, with a certain resigned expression, — as if she wanted to thank me for something; — and I — I could have gladly gone down on my knees to her, and begged her forgiveness that I had guarded her so well against all dangers — and all happiness! *(Pause.)*

Catherine. And many a girl would be happy just the same, if she always had such a brother by her side... and nothing to regret....

Toni. (Enters.) Good evening.... Why, it's all dark here, you can scarcely see a thing. — Ah, Mrs. Binder. Your husband is down-stairs waiting for you, Mrs. Binder... Isn't Christine at home?

Vyring. She went out a quarter of an hour ago.

Catherine. Didn't you meet her? She was going to meet you.

Toni. No... we evidently missed each other. — You're going to hear the band tonight, your husband says.

Catherine. Yes, he is so fond of it. What a charming little hat you have on, Miss

Toni. Isn't it a new one?

Toni. I should say not. — Don't you know this style any more? Last spring's style, only freshly trimmed.

Catherine. Did you trim it yourself?

Toni. Well, of course.

Vyring. So clever!

Catherine. Oh, yes — I keep forgetting that you worked for a year in a milliner shop.

Toni. I shall probably go back again.
Mother wants me to, and that settles it.

Catherine. How is your mother?

Toni. Well enough — she has a little toothache — but the doctor says it's rheumatic pains.

Vyring. Well, it's time for me...

Catherine. I'll go right down with you, Mr. Vyring.

Toni. I'll go, too. But take your overcoat, Mr. Vyring; it's going to be quite cool later on.

Vyring. You think so?

Catherine. Yes, indeed. — How can you be so foolish?

Christine. (Enters.)

Toni. Why, there she is.

Catherine. Back from your walk already?

Christine. Yes, Hello, Toni, — I have a headache. *(Seats herself.)*

Vyring. Headache?

Catherine. That's from the air.

Vyring. Come, what's the matter, Christine? — Please, Miss Toni, will you light the lamp?

Toni. (Sets about it.)

Christine. But I can do that myself.

Vyring. Let me see your face, Christine.

Christine. But, father, it is nothing; it's just the air outside.

Catherine. Lots of people can't stand the spring air.

Vyring. Miss Toni, you'll stay with Christine, won't you?

Toni. Of course I will.

Christine. But it isn't anything, father.

Toni. My mother doesn't make such a fuss over me, when I have a headache.

Vyring. (To Christine, still sitting.)
Are you so tired?

Christine. (Standing up.) I'll get right up again. *(Smiling.)*

Vyring. There — now you look quite different again. *(To Catherine.)* She looks quite different when she smiles, don't you think? Well, good-bye Christine. *(Kisses her.)* And see to it that your little head isn't aching when I come home. *(He is at the door.)*

Catherine. (Softly to Christine.) Have you quarreled?

Christine. (Makes an angry gesture.)

Vyring. (At the door.) Mrs. Binder!

Toni. Good-bye.
(Exeunt Vyring and Catherine.)

Toni. Do you know what your headache comes from? From the sweet wine yesterday. I'm surprised that I don't feel the effects of it. But it was jolly, wasn't it?

Christine. (Nods.)

Toni. They're swell people, aren't they? — both of them, you can't say anything different, can you? — And such nice rooms as Fritz has, really splendid. At Dore's place.. *(Interrupts herself.)* Oh, well. — Say have you still got such a headache? Why don't you talk?... What's the matter with you?

Christine. Only think, — he didn't come.

Toni. Left you in the lurch, did he? Serves you right.

Christine. Why, what do you mean? What have I done?

Toni. You spoil him, that's all; you're too nice to him. A man just can't help getting tyrannical.

Christine. You don't know what you're talking about.

Toni. I do know quite well. — I've been angry with you this long time. He comes late to his appointments; he doesn't take you home; he goes into a theatre-box with strangers; he leaves you in the lurch — and you take it all calmly and make sheep's eyes *(imitating)* at him into the bargain.

Christine. Oh, don't talk so,, don't make yourself out worse than you are. You love Theodore too.

Toni. Love him — di course I love him.
But he won't find me grieving about him, and no man will, not any more. There isn't one of these men that is worth it.

Christine. I never heard you talk so, never!

Toni. No. Tina — we never talked like this before. I never dared, you see. You don't know how afraid of you I was!...But I always thought this: when you once get it, you'll get it bad. And the first time it certainly does give you a shaking up. — But you can be thankful that you've got such a good friend to help you through your first love affair.

Christine. Toni!

Toni. Don't you believe me when I say I'm a good friend to you? If I wasn't here to tell you that he's just a man like the rest, and that the whole manpack isn't worth a single bad hour, God knows what thoughts might come into your head. But I always will say, you never can believe a word men say.

Christine. What do you mean by saying men, men — what do I care about men! —
I'm not asking about the others. — As long as I live I shall never think about another man.

Toni. Well, what are you thinking of?... has he?... Of course — such things have happened; but then you ought to have gone at the affair differently.

Christine. Do keep still!

Toni. Well, what do you want? I can't help it if it's so. — You have to think about a thing like that. You simply have to wait till somebody comes that you can see is in earnest from his face....

Christine. Toni, I can't stand such words to-day; they hurt me.

Toni. (Good-humouredly.) — Oh, now, come ——

Christine. Leave me alone... don't be angry... leave me alone!

Toni. Why should I be angry? I'll go. I didn't want to hurt you, Christine, truly not. *(Turns to go.)* Ah, Mr. Fritz.

Fritz. (Has entered.) Good evening.

Christine. (With a joyous cry.) Fritz! Fritz! *(Rushes into his arms.)*

Toni. (Steals out, her face saying: I'm not needed here.)

Fritz. (Freeing himself.). But —

Christine. They all say you will forsake me! But you won't, will you — not yet — not just yet?

Fritz. Who says it? What ails you?
(Patting her.) But, sweetheart,.. I really thought you would be startled when I suddenly came walking in here.

Christine. Oh — so long as I have you!

Fritz. Come, calm yourself — did you wait long for me?

Christine. Why didn't you come?

Fritz. I was detained and that made me late. Just now I was in the gardens and didn't find you — and was going home again.
Suddenly I had such a longing, such a longing for your dear little face...

Christine. (Happily.) Oh, truly?

Fritz. And then, too, I had such an indescribable desire to see where you live — yes, really — I just had to see it once. And so I couldn't stand it and came up here... and so you really don't mind?

Christine. Oh, the idea!

Fritz. Nobody saw me; and I knew your father was in the theatre.

Christine. What do I care about people!

Fritz. So this is — *(Looks around the room.)* — this is your room? Very pretty.
Christine, You can't see anything. *(Is about to take the shade off the lamp.)*

Fritz. No, don't do that, the light blinds me, it's better this way. So that's the window you've told me about, where you always sit and work, eh? — And the pretty view! *(Smiling.)* But just look at all the roofs you see. — And over there — what's that black thing I see over yonder?

Christine. That's Bald Mountain.

Fritz. Sure enough. You really have a better view than I.

Christine. Oh!

Fritz. I'd like to live up so high, and be able to overlook all the roofs; I think that is very nice. And I suppose the alley is quiet?

Christine. Oh, in the daytime there's noise enough.

Fritz. Do any teams go past?

Christine. Not often, but there's a locksmith in the house opposite.

Fritz. Oh, that's very unpleasant. *(He has sat down.)*

Christine. You get used to it; you don't hear it any more.

Fritz. (Rises again hastily.) Is this really my first visit? Everything seems so familiar to me.... I have imagined everything just this way. *(He starts to look around the room.)*

Christine. No, you mustn't look at anything.

Fritz. What are those pictures?

Christine. Oh, stop!

Fritz. Ah, I want to look at them. *(He takes the lamp and lights the pictures.)*

Christine. "Parting and Return."

Fritz. Sure enough— "Parting and Return."

Christine. I know well enough that the pictures aren't pretty. — There is a much better one in father's room.

Fritz. What picture is it?

Christine. It is a girl looking out of the window, and outside it's winter, you know — and it's name is "Forsaken."

Fritz. Oh. — *(Puts down the lamp.)* Ah, and that's your library. *(Sits down beside the little book-rack.)*

Christine. You'd better not look at them.

Fritz. Why not? Ah! Schiller...
Hauff... Pocket Encyclopaedia... Goodness gracious!

Christine. It only goes to G.

Fritz. (Smiling.) Oh.... A book for old and young....You look at the pictures in it, I suppose?

Christine. Of course I've looked at the pictures.

Fritz. (Still seated.) Who is the gentleman there on the stove?

Christine. Why, don't you know? That's Schubert.

Fritz. (Rising.) Sure enough.

Christine. Because father likes him so much. Father used to compose songs himself, very beautiful ones.

Fritz. And now he doesn't?

Christine. Not any more. *(Pause.)*

Fritz. (Sits down.) How cosy it is here.

Christine. Do you really like it?

Fritz. Very much.... What is that?
(Takes up a vase of artificial flowers standing on the table.)

Christine. He's found something else!

Fritz. No, child, that doesn't belong in here.... It looks so dusty.

Christine. But they certainly aren't dusty.

Fritz. Artificial flowers always look dusty.... Real flowers ought to be in your room, flowers that are fresh and sweet-smelling. From now I shall... *(Breaks off, turns to conceal his emotion.)*

Christine. What? What were you going to say?

Fritz. Nothing, nothing.

Christine. (Rises. Tenderly.) What was it?

Fritz. I was going to say that I would send you fresh flowers to-morrow.

Christine. Well, and did you want to take it back so soon? — Of course! To-morrow you won't be thinking of me any more.

Fritz. (Deprecatory gesture.)

Christine. Certainly, it's out of sight, out of mind, with you.

Fritz. What are you saying?

Christine. Oh, yes, I know. I can tell.

Fritz. How can you imagine such a thing?

Christine. You are to blame yourself. Because you're always keeping secrets from me.... Because you never tell me about yourself. — What do you do all day?

Fritz. Why, sweetheart, that's very simple. I go to lectures — sometimes — then I go into the coffeehouse... then I read... or sometimes I play the piano — then I chat with somebody — then I go calling... but all that is of no account. It's tiresome to talk about it. — But now I must go, child.

Christine. So soon ——

Fritz. Your father will soon be here.

Christine. Not for a long time yet, Fritz, — Stay awhile — just a minute — stay awhile.

Fritz. And then I have... Theodore is expecting me.... I have something to talk over with him.

Christine. To-day?

Fritz. Surely to-day.

Christine. You can see him to-morrow, too.

Fritz. Perhaps I shan't be in Vienna tomorrow.

Christine. Not in Vienna?

Fritz. (Noticing her alarm, calmly, cheerfully.) Well, that wouldn't be anything wonderful, would it? I'm going away for a day — or perhaps for two, you child, you.

Christine. Where to?

Fritz. Where?... Oh, anywhere. — Good heavens, don't make up such a face....
I'm going out to my father's estate.... Well, is that so terrible to you?

Christine. And you never tell me about him, either.

Fritz. No; what a child you are....You don't understand how nice it is to be all alone together. Tell me, don't you feel that?

Christine. No, it isn't nice at all that you never tell me anything about yourself... You see, I'm interested in everything that touches you,.. yes, everything. —
I'd like to have more of you than just the one hour in the evening that we can spend together sometimes. Then you are gone again, and I don't know anything.... Then the whole night goes and a whole day, with so many hours in it — and still I don't know anything. And that often makes me so sad.

Fritz. Why does that make you sad?

Christine. Why, because I have such a longing for you as if you weren't in the same city at all, as if you were somewhere else. You simply disappear, as far as I am concerned, so far away...

Fritz. (Somewhat impatient.) But ——

Christine. Well, it's true!

Fritz. Come here to me. *(She does so.)* After all, the only thing you know is that I — that you love me at this moment....*(She wishes to speak.)* Don't talk about eternity. *(More to himself.)* Perhaps there are moments that scatter around them the aroma of eternity. — That is the only one that we can understand, the only one that

belongs to us. *(He kisses her. Pause. He rises. With a sudden outburst.)* Oh, how beautiful it is here, how beautiful! *(He stands at the window.)* So far from the world you are in here, among all the many houses.... I seem to be so alone here, just with you.... *(Softly.)* So sheltered.

Christine. If you always talked like that... I could almost believe...

Fritz. Believe what, child?

Christine. That you loved me as I dreamed it — the day you kissed me the first time,.. do you remember?

Fritz. (Passionately.) I do love you! —
(He embraces her; tears himself from her.)
But now let me go.

Christine. Are you sorry you said it, so soon again? You are free, you know you are free — you can go and leave me whenever you like... you haven't promised me anything — and I haven't demanded anything of you.... It doesn't matter what becomes of me, then: I've been happy for once, and that's all I ask of life. I only want you to know that and to believe that I never — loved any man before you, and that I never shall love any man — when you get tired of me —

Fritz. (More to himself.) Don't say it, don't say it — it sounds — so sweet.
(There is a knock.)

Fritz. (Starts.) That's probably Theodore.

Christine. (Startled.) He knows that you are here?

Theodore. (Enters.) Good evening. — Impudent of me, eh?

Christine. Do you have such important matters to discuss with him?

Theodore. I certainly have; and have been looking everywhere for him.

Fritz. (In a low voice.) Why didn't you wait below?

Christine. What are you whispering to him?

Theodore. (Wishing her to hear.) Why I didn't wait below.... Well, if I had absolutely known that you were here....But I couldn't risk walking up and down outside for two hours.

Fritz. (Pointedly.) Then... you will go with me to-morrow?

Theodore. (Comprehending.) Surely.

Fritz. That's right.

Theodore. But I've been hurrying so that I must beg permission to sit down for a few seconds.

Christine. Please do. *(Busies herself at the window.)*

Fritz. (Softly.) Anything new? — Did you find out about her?

Theodore. No. I merely came to get you because you are so incautious. What's the use of these unnecessary excitements? You ought to try to sleep.... It's rest you need.... *(Christine is near them again.)*

Fritz. Tell me, isn't this a dear little room?

Theodore. Yes, it is very nice. *(To Christine.)* Do you stay here at home all day long? — Really, it is very homelike here.
A little high up for my taste.

Fritz. That's just what I like about it.

Theodore. But now I'm going to take Fritz away from you; we've got to get up early in the morning.

Christine. Then you are really going away?

Theodore. He will come again, Miss Christine.

Christine. Will you write to me?

Theodore. But if he comes back tomorrow —

Christine. Oh, I know he's going to stay longer than that.

Fritz. (Starts.)

Theodore. (Notices it.) Well, does he have to write immediately? I wouldn't have thought you so sentimental.... Well... kiss each other good-bye, since it'll be so long.... *(Breaks off.)* I'm simply not here. *(Fritz and Christine kiss.)*

Theodore. (Takes out a cigarette-case and puts a cigarette in his mouth; seeks vainly for a match.) Tell me, dear Christine, haven't you a match?

Christine. Oh, yes, there are some.

(Points to a holder on the chest of drawers.)

Theodore. It's empty.

Christine. I'll get you one. *(Hurries into adjoining room.)*

Fritz. (Looking after her.) Oh, God, how such hours lie to us!

Theodore. Why, what hours?

Fritz. I'm almost ready to believe that my happiness is here, that this sweet girl — *(Breaks off.)* — but this hour is a tremendous liar....

Theodore. Absurd talk.... How you will laugh at it.

Fritz. I don’t think I shall have any time for that.

Christine. (Returns.) Here you are.

Theodore. Thanks very much.... Goodbye, then. — *(To Fritz.)* Well, what do you want now?

Fritz. (Looks back and forth around the room, as if to deepen the impression in his mind.) It’s hard to leave it.

Christine. Oh, make fun of it if you like.

Theodore. (Firmly.) Come. — Good-bye, Christine.

Fritz. Farewell.

Christine. Till we meet again. *(Theodore and Fritz exeunt. She stands a moment, anxious, then goes to the open door, softly.)* Fritz!

Fritz. (Comes back again and presses her to his heart.) Farewell.

ACT THREE



THE SAME SCENE as the second act. It is noon.

Christine. (Alone, sitting sewing by the window; lays down her work.)

Lena. (Enters.) Good day, Miss Christine.

Christine. (Very absent-mindedly.) Good day, child; what is it?

Lena. Mother sent me to see if I could get the theatre tickets.

Christine. Father hasn't got home yet, child; will you wait?

Lena. No, Miss Christine; then I'll come after lunch again.

Christine. Very well.

Lena. (Going, turns back.) And mother said to ask Miss Christine if her headache was gone yet.

Christine. Yes, child.

Lena. Good-bye, Miss Christine.

Christine. Good-bye.

Toni. (Enters just as Lena is going out.)

Lena. Good day, Miss Toni.

Toni. Hello, little monkey!

Lena. (Exit.)

Christine. (Rises to meet Toni.) Then they are back?

Toni. How should I know?

Christine. And you haven't any letter, nothing?

Toni. No.

Christine. You have no letter, either?

Toni. What should we write to each other?

Christine. They've been gone since day before yesterday.

Toni. Yes, yes, that's not such a long time. You needn't make such a fuss on that account. I don't understand you... and how you look, — your face is all tearstained. Your father will surely notice it when he comes home.

Christine. (Simply.) My father knows everything.

Toni. (Almost frightened.) What?

Christine. I told him.

Toni. That's another of your bright ideas.
But of course your face shows everything.
And does he know who it is?

Christine. Yes.

Toni. And did he scold?

Christine. (Shakes her head.)

Toni. What did he say, then?

Christine. Nothing.... He went away very quietly, as usual.

Tom. And still it was stupid of you to tell. You'll see.... Do you know why your father said nothing? Because he thinks Fritz will marry you.

Christine. Why do you speak of that?

Toni. Do you know what I think?

Christine. Well, what?

Toni. That this whole story of a journey is a lie.

Christine. What?

Toni. Perhaps they haven't gone away at all.

Christine. They have gone — I know they have. Yesterday evening I went past his house; the blinds were down; he isn't there.

Toni. Oh, I believe that. They're away all right. But they won't come back — at least not to us.

Christine. (Anxiously.) Oh ——.

Toni. Well, it's possible.

Christine. You say that so calmly.

Toni. Why yes — whether it happens today or tomorrow — or in six months — it comes to the same thing.

Christine. Oh, you don't know what you are saying.... You don't know Fritz....
He isn't like what you think. I found that out when he was here in my room the other day. Often he only pretends to be indifferent — but he does love me.... *(As if she divined Toni's reply.)* Yes, yes, not forever, I know that... but it can't stop all at once!

Toni. Well, I don't know Fritz so well.

Christine. He will come back, and Theodore will come back too; I am sure of it.

Toni. (Makes a gesture indicating indifference.)

Christine. Toni... do me a favor.

Toni. Don't be so excited — what is it you want?

Christine. Go to Theodore's, it's right near here.... Ask in the house whether he's got back yet, and if he isn't back, perhaps they'll know when he's coming.

Toni. I'm not going to run after a man.

Christine. He doesn't need to find it out. Perhaps you'll happen to meet him. It's almost one o'clock now — he'll be just going to lunch.

Toni. Why don't you go and ask at Fritz's house?

Christine. I'm afraid to — he doesn't like that.... And he is certainly not back yet.
But perhaps Theodore is back by now and knows when Fritz is coming. Oh, please Toni!

Toni. You're so childish sometimes.

Christine. Do it for me! Go and ask! It won't do any harm.

Toni. Well, if it means so much to you I'll go. But it won't do much good. I'm sure they aren't back yet.

Christine. And you'll come right back, won't you?

Toni. Yes, yes; mother can wait lunch a little.

Christine. I thank you, Toni, you're so good.

Toni. Of course I'm good — but now you be sensible, won't you?... Well, so long.

Christine. Oh, thank you!

Toni. (Exit.)

Christine. (Arranges the room, folds up her sewing, etc. Then she goes to window and looks out. After a moment VYRING enters without her seeing him at first. He is in great excitement, looks anxiously at his

daughter.)

Vyring. She knows nothing yet, nothing.
(He remains standing in the doorway and does not venture to take a step into the room.)

Christine. (Turns, sees him, starts.)

Vyring. (Tries to smile. He steps in.) Well, Christine.... *(As if calling her to him.)*

Christine. (Goes to him, as if to fall before him.)

Vyring. (Prevents her.) Well... what are you thinking of, Christine? We...*(With a new resolve.)* We'll just forget it, shall we?

Christine. (Raises her head.)

Vyring. Why yes... I — and you!

Christine. Father, didn't you understand me this morning?

Vyring. Well, what would you have, Christine?... I surely must tell you what I think about it, don't you think so? Well, then...

Christine. Father, what does this mean?

Vyring. Come here, my child.... Listen to me quietly. You know I listened quietly to you, when you told me. We must —— — 'Christine. Oh, I beg you, don't speak to me so, father. If you have thought it over, and find that you can't forgive me, then drive me away — but don't speak that way.

Vyring. Just listen quietly to me, Christine. You can still do whatever you will.
.. See, Christine, you are so young.
Haven't you ever thought... *(With great hesitation.)* that the whole thing might be a mistake?

Christine. Why do you say that to me, father? I know so well what I have done — and I don't ask anything — not from you and not from anybody in the world, if it has been a mistake.... I just told you, drive me away, but...

Vyring. (Interrupting.) How can you talk so.... Even if it was a mistake, is that any reason for getting desperate right away, such a young creature as you are? Just think how beautiful, how wonderful life is. Just think how many things there are to give you joy, how much youth and how much happiness still lies before you.... See, I don't have much of the world any more, and even for me life is still beautiful — and I can still look forward to so many things. How we shall be together — how we shall plan our life, you and I — how you will begin to sing again, now that the beautiful days are here — and how we'll take a whole day off, when summer comes, and go out into the green country — Oh, there are so many lovely things... so many. It is silly to give up everything, because one must give up his first happiness, or anything that he thought was that.

Christine. Why... *(Anxiously.)* then must I give it up?

Vyring. Well, was it happiness? Do you really think, Christine, that you had to tell your father today? I have known it for a long time — and I knew too that you would tell me. No, it never was happiness for you.... Don't I know those eyes? There wouldn't have been tears in them so often, and those cheeks wouldn't have been pale so much, if you had loved a man who was worthy of it.

Christine. Why, how can you... what do you know... what have you heard?

Vyring. Nothing, nothing at all.... But you yourself told me what he is.... A young fellow like that — what does he know?
Has he the faintest idea of what falls into his hands — does he know the difference between the true and the false — and all your mad love — did he ever understand that?

Christine. (More and more alarmed.) You and he.... Were you at his house?

Vyring. Why, what are you thinking of!
He went away, didn't he? But Christine, I still have a head on my shoulders, and my eyes in my head. Come, child, forget about it, do! Your future lies in an altogether different place. You can, you will still be as happy as you deserve. You will find a man some time who will know what a treasure he has in you.

Christine. (Has hurried to the chest of drawers to get her hat.)

Vyring. What are you doing?

Christine. I'm going out.

Vyring. Where to?

Christine. To him... to him.

Vyring. What are you thinking of?

Christine. You're keeping something from me — let me go.

Vyring. (Holding her firmly.) Come to your senses, child. He isn't there at all.
Perhaps he's gone away for a very long time.... Stay here; what do you want there?... Tomorrow or this evening I'll go there with you. You can't go out on the street like that... do you know how you look?

Christine. You will go with me?

Vyring. I promise you I will. Only stay here now; sit down and come to your senses again. It's enough to make a man laugh, almost, to look at you.... and all for nothing. Can't you stand it here with your father at all any more?

Christine. What is it you know?

Vyring. (More and more helpless.) What should I know?... I know that I love you, that you are my only child, that you must stay with me all the time —

Christine. Enough — let me go. *(She wrests herself from him and opens the door; Toni appears in it.)*

Toni. (Utters a little cry, as Christine) rushes toward her.) Why do you frighten me so?

Christine. (Steps back, seeing Theodore behind Toni.)

Theodore. (Remains in the doorway; he is dressed in black.)

Christine. What... what is... *(No answer. She looks Theodore in the face; he cannot meet her eyes.)* Where is he, where is he?... *(In the greatest terror.*
No answer; all faces are embarrassed and sad.) Where is he? *(To Theodore.)* Speak, can't you?

Theodore. (Tries to speak.)

Christine. (Looks at him wide-eyed, looks around her, comprehends the look on their faces, her face shows the dawn of this understanding, she utters a terrible cry.) Theodore... he is...

Theodore. (Nods.)

Christine. (Seizes her forehead, cannot understand it; she goes to Theodore, takes him by the arm, as if demented.) He is... dead? *(As if asking herself.)*

Vyring. My child ——

Christine. (Thrusting him away.) Speak, Theodore, speak!

Theodore. You know all.

Christine. I know nothing.... I don't know what has happened... do you think... I can't hear everything now?... how did it happen... Father... Theodore.. *(To Toni.)* You know it too.

Theodore. An unfortunate accident.

Christine. What, what?

Theodore. He fell.

Christine. What does that mean: he...

Theodore. He fell in a duel.

Christine. (Shrieks. She is about to fall, Wring sustains her, motions to Theodore to go. She notes it and seizes him.) Stay here.... I must know all. Do you think you can keep anything from me now?

Theodore. What else do you want to know?

Christine. Why — why did he fight a duel?

Theodore. I don't know the reason.

Christine. With whom, with whom?...You surely know who killed him?... Well, well, who...

Theodore. Nobody you know.

Christine. Who, who?

Toni. Christine!

Christine. Who? You tell me! *(To Toni.)*... Father, you tell me... *(No answer. She starts to go out. Vyring holds her back.)* Can't I know who killed him, and for what cause?

Theodore. It was... a trivial cause...

Christine. You're not telling the truth... why, why...

Theodore. Dear Christine....

Christine. (As if about to interrupt, goes up to him; looks at him in silence, then suddenly shrieks.) On account of a woman?

Theodore. No ——

Christine. Yes — for a woman... *(Turning to Toni.)* for that woman — for that woman that he loved. And her husband — yes, yes, her husband killed him... And I... what am I? What was I to him?... Theodore... haven't you anything for me at all... didn't he write down anything?... Didn't he tell you anything for me? Didn't you find anything... a letter... a note...

Theodore. (Shakes his head.)

Christine. And that evening... when he was here, when you came to get him... he knew it, he knew then that he perhaps would never... And he went away from here to be killed for another woman. No, no, it is not possible... didn't he know what he was to me... didn't...

Theodore. He did know. On the last morning, when we drove out together... he spoke of you too.

Christine. He spoke of me too! Of me too! And of what else? Of how many other people, of how many other things, that meant just as much to him as I did? Of me too! Oh, God!... And of his father and his mother and his room and of the springtime and of the city and of everything, everything that belonged to his life and that he had to give up just as much as he gave up me — of everything he talked to you... and of me too...

Theodore. (Moved.) He surely loved you.

Christine. Love? He? I was nothing to him but a pastime — and he died for another woman! And I — I worshiped him! Didn't he know that?... That I gave him everything I could give, that I would have died for him — that he was my God and my bliss of Heaven — didn't he see that at all? He could go away from me with a smile, out of my room, and be shot down for another woman.... Father, father, can you understand that?

Vyring. (Goes to her.) Christine!

Theodore. (To Toni.) Child, you might have spared me this.

Toni. (Looks at him venomously.)

Theodore. I have had enough distress... these last days...

Christine. (With sudden resolve.) Theodore, take me to him — I want to see him — once more I want to see him — his face — Theodore, take me to him.

Theodore. (With a gesture, hesitatingly.) No....

Christine. Why "no"? You can't refuse me that! Surely I can see him once more?

Theodore. It is too late.

Christine. Too late? To see his corpse... is it too late? Yes... yes... *(She does not understand.)*

Theodore. He was buried this morning.

Christine. (With the greatest horror.)
Buried... And I didn't know about it?
They shot him... and put him in his coffin and carried him out and buried him down in the earth — and I couldn't even see him once more? He's been dead two days — and you didn't come and tell me?

Theodore. (Much moved.) In these two days I have... You cannot dream all that I... Consider that it was my duty to notify his parents — I had to think of many things — and then my own state of mind.

Christine. Your...

Theodore. And then the... it was done very quietly.... Only the closest relatives and friends...

Christine. The closest —? And I ——?... What am I?

Toni. They would have asked that.

Christine. What am I? Less than all the rest —? Less than his relatives, less than — you?

Vyring. My child, my child. Come to me, to me.... *(He embraces her. To Theodore.)* Go... leave me alone with her.

Theodore. I am very... *(With tears in his voice.)* I never suspected...

Christine. Never suspected what? That I loved him? (Vyring draws her to him; Theodore looks down; Toni stands near

Christine. Freeing herself.) Take me to his grave!

Vyring. No, no —

Toni. Don’t go, Christine.

Theodore. Christine... later... tomorrow... when you are calmer ——

Christine. Tomorrow? When I shall be calmer? And in a month completely consoled, eh? And in six months I can laugh again, can I? *(Laughing shrilly.)* And then when will the next lover come?

Vyring. Christine...

Christine. Stay here, then... I can find the way alone...
Vyring and Toni. *(Together.)* Don’t go.

Christine. It’s even better... if I... let me go, let go.

Vyring. Christine, stay here.

Toni. Don’t go! Perhaps you’ll find the other one there — praying.

Christine. (To herself, her eyes fixed.) I won’t pray there... no... *(She rushes out; the others speechless for the moment.)*

Vyring. Hurry after her.
(Theodore and Toni exeunt.)

Vyring. I can’t, I can’t... *(He goes painfully from the door to the window.)*
What does she want... what does she want... *(He looks through the window.)*
She won’t come back — she won’t come back!

(He sinks to the floor, sobbing loudly.)

THE END

Hands Around (1897)

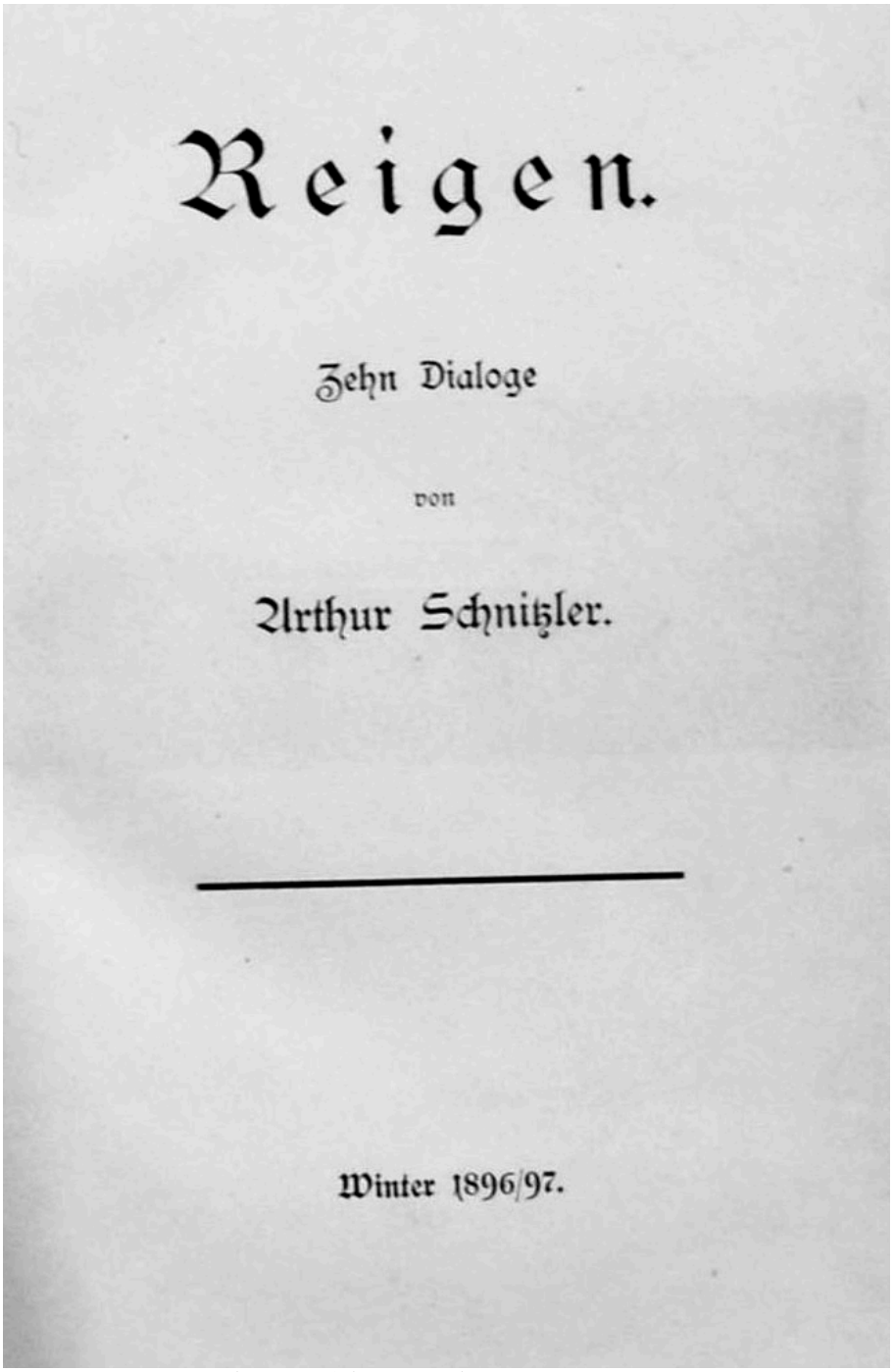
A CYCLE OF TEN DIALOGUES

Original German Title: 'Reigen'

Translated by L. D. Edwards and F. L. Glaser, 1920

Schnitzler's works were often controversial, both for their frank description of sexuality and for their strong stand against anti-Semitism. In a letter to Schnitzler Sigmund Freud confessed, "I have gained the impression that you have learned through intuition — although actually as a result of sensitive introspection — everything that I have had to unearth by laborious work on other persons." Schnitzler was branded as a pornographer after the release of the following drama, *Reigen*, in which ten pairs of characters are portrayed before and after the sexual act, leading and ending with a prostitute. Initially printed privately in 1900 in a limited edition, it was freely published in 1903 by Fritz Freund's publishing house in Vienna. The furor after the presentation of this play was couched in the strongest anti-Semitic terms. *Reigen* was made into a French language film in 1950 by the German-born director Max Ophüls as La Ronde. The film achieved considerable success in the English-speaking world, with the result that Schnitzler's play is better known there under its French title.

Reigen scrutinises the sexual morality and class ideology of its day through successive encounters between pairs of characters before or after a sexual encounter. By choosing characters across all levels of society, the drama offers social commentary on how sexual contact transgresses class boundaries. The play was not publicly performed until 23 December 1920 in Berlin and 1 February 1921 in Vienna. It elicited violent critical and popular reactions. Schnitzler suffered moralistic and personal attacks as a Jewish pornographer and the outcry came to be known as the "Reigen scandal." Despite a 1921 Berlin court verdict that dismissed the charges of immorality, Schnitzler withdrew the play himself from public production in German-speaking countries.



Title page of the original 1900 private printing

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INTRODUCTION



HUMANITY SEEMS GAYEST when dancing on the brink of a volcano. The culture of a period preceding a social cataclysm is marked by a spirit of light wit and sophisticated elegance which finds expression in a literature of a distinct type. This literature is light-hearted, audacious and self-conscious. It can treat with the most charming insouciance subjects which in another age would have been awkward or even vulgar. But with the riper experience of a period approaching its end the writers feel untrammeled in the choice of theme by pride or prejudice knowing that they will never transgress the line of good taste.

So it was in the declining days of the Roman civilization when Lucian of Samosata wrote his *Dialogues of the Hetærai* and countless poets penned their intricate epigrams on the art and experience of love. So it was in England when the fine vigor of the Elizabethan and Miltonic age gave way to the Restoration and the calculating brilliance of a Congreve or a Wycherly.

But the exquisite handling of the licentious was elaborated into a perfect technique in eighteenth century France. The spirit of the Rococo with its predilection for the well-measured pose was singularly well adapted to the artistic expression of what in a cruder age could only have been voiced with coarseness and vulgarity. In the literature of this period we meet again the spirit that animates the gracious paintings of Watteau and Fragonard. The scenes we admire in their panels recur in literary style in works like Choderlos de Laclos' *Liaisons dangereuses* and Louvet de Couvray's *Les amours du Chevalier de Faublas*. Again the same note is heard in Beaumarchais' *Le Mariage de Figaro*, in which the society of the period is travestied with brilliant wit and worldly philosophy. The court of Louis XVI. quite unaware, looked on and applauded a play which Napoleon later characterized as "the revolution already in action."

During the closing years of the nineteenth century a similar spirit has hovered over Vienna, when it was the last and staunchest stronghold of aristocracy in the modern world. Its literature reflected the charm of a fastidious amatory etiquette which is forbidden in sterner and soberer environment, while it gayly ignored the slow gathering of the clouds which foreshadowed its own catastrophe and martyrdom. As Percival Pollard once so well put it: "All that rises out of that air has had fascination, grace, insinuation, and intrigue. Neither tremendous passion nor tremendous problems have stirred, to all appearances, these polite artists of Vienna. Passion might be there, but what was to be artistically expressed was, rather, the witty or ironically mournful surfaces of passion."

The literary master of this world is concededly Arthur Schnitzler, in whom are curiously combined the sophisticated elegance of the Viennese man of letters and the disenchanting wisdom of the practising physician. He was born in Vienna in 1862, the son of a doctor. He studied medicine himself, took his degree in 1885, and was for two years connected with a hospital. Since then he has practised privately, and has also found the time to write a long series of plays, both in prose and verse, several novels, and many shorter stories. Of these a considerable number have appeared in English.

Reigen, here translated as *Hands Around*, is a series of ten comedies — miniatures in dialogue between man and woman in various ages and walks of life. But transgressing the merely literary they are psychological studies of the interplay of sex, and keen analyses of the sophisticated modern soul, done with freedom and finesse. There are no grim questions of right and wrong in these subtle revelations of the merely human. In fact one might call them studies in the etiquette of the liaison and all its nuances.

The cycle begins with a girl of the streets and a soldier. Then come the soldier and a parlor-maid, the

parlor-maid and a young man, the young man and a young wife, the young wife and her husband, the husband and a sweet young miss, the sweet young miss and a poet, the poet and an actress, the actress and a count, until finally the cycle is completed with the count and the girl of the streets. A vicious circle, some may say, and such it surely would have been in the hands of a lesser artist than Schnitzler, for he would only have made the book hideously fleshly, instead of a marvelous psychological study in the ecstacies and disillusions of love and the whole tragedy of human wishes unsatisfied even in their apparent gratification.

But as it is the silken portières of discreet alcoves are opened quietly before our eyes, and we hear the whisper of the most intimate secrets. But with all their realism there is no word in these dialogues which could antagonize the susceptibilities of any sincere student or true lover of humanity. All stratagems of sex are uncovered not through the curious observations of a faunic mind, but through the finer eyes of a connoisseur of things human.

The Puritan fanatic with his jaundiced inhibitions or the moral ideologist with his heart of leather may toss the book aside resentful because of its inherent truth. The philosopher of human life, taking the larger aspect of this drama, will close it with the serene smile of understanding.

Any attempt to turn a dialogue so full of delicate shades as is this of Schnitzler into a language like English, whose genius tends rather toward a graphic concreteness and realism, is full of pitfalls and difficulties. The translators, however, hope that they have accomplished their task with reasonable success, thinking always of the spirit rather than the letter. They also take this occasion to express their appreciation to Dr. Arthur Schnitzler for his kindness in granting them his authorization for this translation of *Reigen*.

F. L. G.
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CHARACTERS



THE GIRL OF the Streets,

The Soldier,

The Parlor Maid,

The Young Man,

The Young Wife,

The Husband,

The Sweet Young Miss,

The Poet,

The Actress,

The Count.

THE GIRL OF THE STREETS AND THE SOLDIER



LATE IN THE evening near the Augarten Bridge.

SOLDIER
(*Enters whistling, on his way home*)

GIRL
Hello, my beautiful angel!

SOLDIER
(*Turns and continues on his way*)

GIRL
Don't you want to come with me?

SOLDIER
Oh, I am the beautiful angel?

GIRL
Sure, who else? Do come with me. I live very near here.

SOLDIER
I've no time. I must get back to the barracks.

GIRL
You'll get to your barracks in plenty of time. It's much nicer with me.

SOLDIER
(*Close to her*) That's possible.

GIRL
Ps-st! A guard may pass any minute.

SOLDIER
Rot! A guard! I carry a saber too!

GIRL
Ah, come with me.

SOLDIER
Let me alone. I have no money anyway.

GIRL
I don't want any money.

SOLDIER

(*Stopping. They are under a street-lamp*) You don't want any money? What kind of a girl are you, then?

GIRL

The civilians pay me. Chaps like you don't have to pay me for anything.

SOLDIER

Maybe you're the girl my pal told me about.

GIRL

I don't know any pal of yours.

SOLDIER

You're she, all right! You know — in the café down the street — He went home with you from there.

GIRL

Lots have gone home with me from that café… Oh, lots!

SOLDIER

All right. Let's go!

GIRL

So, you're in a hurry now?

SOLDIER

Well, what are we waiting for? Anyhow, I must be back at the barracks by ten.

GIRL

Been in service long?

SOLDIER

What business is that of yours? Is it far?

GIRL

Ten minutes' walk.

SOLDIER

That's too far for me. Give me a kiss.

GIRL

(*Kissing him*) I like that best anyway — when I love some one.

SOLDIER

I don't. No, I can't go with you. It's too far.

GIRL

Say, come to-morrow afternoon.

SOLDIER
Sure. Give me your address.

GIRL
But maybe you won't come.

SOLDIER
If I promise!

GIRL
Look here — if my place is too far to-night — there … there…
(*She points toward the Danube*)

SOLDIER
What's there?

GIRL
It's nice and quiet there, too … no one is around.

SOLDIER
Oh, that's not the real thing.

GIRL
It's always the real thing with me. Come, stay with me now. Who knows, if we'll be alive to-morrow.

SOLDIER
Come along then — but quick.

GIRL
Be careful! It's dark here. If you slip, you'll fall in the river.

SOLDIER
Would be the best thing, perhaps.

GIRL
Sh-h. Wait a minute. We'll come to a bench soon.

SOLDIER
You seem to know this place pretty well.

GIRL
I'd like to have you for a sweetheart.

SOLDIER
I'd fight too much.

GIRL
I'd cure you of that soon enough.

SOLDIER
Humph —

GIRL
Don’t make so much noise. Sometimes a guard stumbles down here. Would you believe we are in the middle of Vienna?

SOLDIER
Come here. Come over here.

GIRL
You are crazy! If we slipped here, we’d fall into the river.

SOLDIER
(*Has grabbed her*) Oh you —

GIRL
Hold tight to me.

SOLDIER
Don’t be afraid…

GIRL
It would have been nicer on the bench.

SOLDIER
Here or there, it doesn’t matter to me… Well, pick yourself up.

GIRL
What’s your hurry —?

SOLDIER

I must get to the barracks. I’ll be late anyhow.

GIRL
Say, what’s your name?

SOLDIER
What’s that to you?

GIRL
My name is Leocadia.

SOLDIER
Humph! I never heard such a name before.

GIRL

Listen!

SOLDIER
Well, what do you want?

GIRL
Give me just a dime for the janitor.

SOLDIER
Humph!… Do you think I'm your meal-ticket? Good-by, Leocadia…

GIRL
Tightwad! Pimp!
(*He disappears*)

THE SOLDIER AND THE PARLOR-MAID



PRATER GARDENS. SUNDAY Evening. A road which leads from the Wurstelprater into dark tree arcades. Confused music from the Wurstelprater can still be heard; also strains from the cheap dancehall, a vulgar polka, played by a brass band. THE SOLDIER. THE PARLOR-MAID.

MAID
Now tell me why you wanted to leave.

SOLDIER
(*Grins sheepishly*)

MAID
It was so beautiful and I so love to dance.

SOLDIER
(*Puts his arm around her waist*)

MAID
(*Submitting*) But we aren't dancing now. Why do you hold me so tight?

SOLDIER
What's your name? Katy?

MAID
You've always got a "Katy" on your mind.

SOLDIER

I know — I know … Marie.

MAID
Goodness, it's dark here. I'm afraid.

SOLDIER
You needn't be afraid when I'm with you. I can take care of myself!

MAID
But where are we going? There's no one around. Come, let's go back!… It's so dark!

SOLDIER
(*Pulling at his cigar until it glows brightly*) There … it's already getting brighter. Ha —! Oh, you dearie!

MAID
Oh! what are you doing there? If I had known this before!

SOLDIER
The devil take me, if any one at the dance to-day felt softer and rounder than you, Miss Marie.

MAID
Did you find it out in the same way with all the others?

SOLDIER
You notice things … dancing. You find out lots that way!

MAID
But you danced much oftener with that cross-eyed blonde than with me.

SOLDIER
She’s an old friend of one of my pals.

MAID
Of the corporal with the upturned mustache?

SOLDIER
Oh no, I mean the civilian. You know, the one who was talking with me at the table in the beginning. The one who has such a husky voice.

MAID
Oh I know. He’s fresh.

SOLDIER
Did he do anything to you? I’ll show him! What did he do to you?

MAID
Oh nothing… I only noticed how he was with the others.

SOLDIER
Tell me, Miss Marie…

MAID
You’ll burn me with your cigar.

SOLDIER
Pardon me! — Miss Marie — or may I say Marie?

MAID
We’re not such good friends yet…

SOLDIER
There’re many who don’t like each-other, and yet use first names.

MAID
Next time, if we… But, Frank!

SOLDIER
Oh, you remember my name?

MAID
But, Frank…

SOLDIER
That's right, call me Frank, Miss Marie.

MAID
Don't be so fresh — but, sh-h, suppose some one should come!

SOLDIER
What if some one did come? They couldn't see anything two steps off.

MAID
For goodness' sake, where are we going?

SOLDIER
Look! There's two just like us.

MAID
Where? I don't see anything.

SOLDIER
There … just ahead of us.

MAID
Why do you say: "two like us" —

SOLDIER
Well, I mean, they like each other too.

MAID
Look out! What's that there? I nearly fell.

SOLDIER
Oh, that's the meadow-gate.

MAID
Don't shove me so. I'll fall.

SOLDIER
Sh-h, not so loud.

MAID
Stop! Now I'm really going to scream — What are you doing?… Stop now —

SOLDIER
There’s no one anywhere around.

MAID
Then, let’s go back where the people are.

SOLDIER
We don’t need them. Why — Marie, we need … for that…

MAID
Stop, Frank, please, for Heaven’s sake! Listen to me, if I had … known … oh … come!

SOLDIER
(*Blissfully*) Once more… Oh…

MAID
… I can’t see your face at all.

SOLDIER
Don’t matter — my face…

SOLDIER
Well, Miss Marie, you can’t stay here on the grass all night.

MAID
Please, Frank, help me.

SOLDIER
Oh, come along.

MAID
Oh, Lord help me, Frank.

SOLDIER
Well, what’s the matter with me?

MAID
You’re a bad man, Frank.

SOLDIER
Yes, yes. Say, wait a minute.

MAID
Why do you leave me alone?

SOLDIER
Can’t you let me light my cigar!

MAID
It’s so dark.

SOLDIER
It’ll be light again to-morrow morning.

MAID
Tell me, at least, you love me.

SOLDIER
Well, you must have felt that, Miss Marie!

MAID
Where are we going now?

SOLDIER
Back, of course.

MAID
Please, don’t walk so fast.

SOLDIER
Well, what’s wrong? I don’t like to walk around in the dark.

MAID
Tell me, Frank … do you love me?

SOLDIER
But I just told you that I loved you!

MAID
Won’t you give me a little kiss?

SOLDIER
(*Condescendingly*) There… Listen — There’s the music again.

MAID
Would you really like to go back, and dance again?

SOLDIER
Of course, why not?

MAID
But, Frank, see, I have to get home. Madame will scold me anyway, — she’s cranky … she’d like it best if I never went out.

SOLDIER
Well, you can go home.

MAID
But, I thought, Frank, you'd take me home.

SOLDIER
Take you home? Oh!

MAID
Please, it's so sad to go home alone.

SOLDIER
Where do you live?

MAID
Not very far — in Porzellanstrasse.

SOLDIER
So? Then we go the same way … but it's still too early for me … me for the dance… I've got late leave to-day… I don't need to be back at the barracks before twelve o'clock. I'm going to dance.

MAID
Oh, I see, now it's that cross-eyed blonde's turn.

SOLDIER
Humph! — Her face isn't so bad.

MAID
Oh Lord, how wicked men are. I'm sure you do the same to every one.

SOLDIER
That'd be too much! —

MAID
Please, Frank, no more to-day — stay with me to-day, you see —

SOLDIER
Oh, very well, all right. But I suppose I may dance.

MAID
I'm not going to dance with any one else to-night.

SOLDIER
There it is already…

MAID
What?

SOLDIER
The hall! How quick we got back. They're still playing the same thing … that tatata-tum tatata-tum (*He hums*

with the band)… Well, I'll take you home, if you want to wait for me … if not … good-by —

MAID
Yes, I'll wait.
(*They enter the dancehall*)

SOLDIER
Say, Miss Marie, get yourself a glass of beer. (*Turning to a blonde who is just dancing past him in the arms of another, very formally*) Miss, may I ask for a dance? —

THE PARLOR MAID AND THE YOUNG MAN



SULTRY SUMMER AFTERNOON. The parents of the YOUNG MAN *are away in the country. The cook has gone out. The* PARLOR-MAID *is in the kitchen writing a letter to the soldier who is now her sweetheart. The* YOUNG MAN'S *bell rings. She gets up and goes to his room. The* YOUNG MAN *is lying on a couch, smoking a cigarette and reading a French novel.*

MAID
Yes, Sir?

YOUNG MAN
Oh, yes, Marie, oh, yes; I rang, yes … I only wanted … yes, of course… Oh, yes, of course, let the blinds down, Marie… It's cooler with the blinds down … yes…
(*The* MAID *goes to the window and pulls down the blinds*)

YOUNG MAN
(*Continues reading*) What are you doing, Marie? Oh, yes. But, now, I can't see to read.

MAID
You are always so studious, Sir.

YOUNG MAN
(*Ignoring the remark*) There, that's better.
(MARIE *goes.*)

YOUNG MAN
(*Tries to go on with his reading, lets the book fall, and rings again*)

MAID
(*Enters*)

YOUNG MAN

I say, Marie … let's see, what was it I wanted to say? … oh, yes… Is there any cognac in the house?

MAID
Yes, but it's locked up.

YOUNG MAN
Well, who has the key?

MAID
Lini.

YOUNG MAN

Who is Lini?

MAID
The cook, Mr. Alfred.

YOUNG MAN
Well, then ask Lini for it.

MAID
Yes, but it's Lini's day out.

YOUNG MAN
So…

MAID
Can I get anything for you from the café, Sir?

YOUNG MAN
Thank you, no… It is hot enough as it is. I don't need any cognac. Listen, Marie, bring me a glass of water. Wait, Marie, — let it run, till it gets quite cold.
Exit MAID. The YOUNG MAN gazes after her. At the door the MAID looks back at him, and the YOUNG MAN glances into the air. The MAID turns on the water and lets it run. Meanwhile, she goes into her room, washes her hands, and arranges her curls before the mirror. Then she brings the glass of water to the YOUNG MAN. She approaches the couch. The YOUNG MAN raises himself upon his elbow. The MAID gives him the glass of water and their fingers touch.

YOUNG MAN
Thank you — Well, what is the matter? — Be careful. Put the glass back on the tray. (*He leans back, and stretches himself*) How late is it?

MAID
Five o'clock, Sir.

YOUNG MAN
Ah, five o'clock. — That's fine. —

MAID
(*Goes. At the door she turns around. The* YOUNG MAN *has followed her with his eyes; she notices it, and smiles*)

YOUNG MAN
(*Remains stretched out awhile; then, suddenly, he gets up. He walks to the door, back again, and lies down on the couch. He again tries to read. After a few moments, he rings once more.*)

MAID
(*Appears with a smile which she does not try to hide*)

YOUNG MAN
Listen, Marie, there was something I wanted to ask you. Didn't Dr. Schueller call this morning?

MAID
No, Sir, nobody called this morning.

YOUNG MAN
That is strange. Then, Dr. Schueller didn't call. Do you know Dr. Schueller by sight?

MAID
Of course, I do. He's the big gentleman with the black beard.

YOUNG MAN
Yes. Then, perhaps, he called after all?

MAID
No, Sir. Nobody called.

YOUNG MAN
(*Resolutely*) Come here, Marie.

MAID
(*Coming a little nearer*) Yes, Sir.

YOUNG MAN
Still nearer … so … ah … I only thought…

MAID
Do you want anything, Sir?

YOUNG MAN

I thought… Well, I thought — only about your blouse … what kind of a blouse is it … can't you come closer. I won't bite you.

MAID
(*Comes close to him*) What is the matter with my blouse? Don't you like it, Sir?

YOUNG MAN
(*Takes hold of her blouse, and draws her down to him*) Blue? It is a nice blue. (*Simply*) You are very prettily dressed, Marie.

MAID
But, Sir…

YOUNG MAN
Ah… What is the matter?… (*He has opened her blouse. In a matter of fact tone*) You have a beautiful white skin, Marie.

MAID
You are flattering me, Sir.

YOUNG MAN
(*Kissing her on the breast*) That can't hurt you.

MAID
Oh, no.

YOUNG MAN
But you sigh so. Why are you sighing?

MAID
Oh, Mr. Alfred…

YOUNG MAN
And what charming little slippers you have…

MAID
… But … Sir … if the doorbell should ring. —

YOUNG MAN
Who will ring now?

MAID
But, Sir … look … it is so light…

YOUNG MAN
You needn't feel at all shy with me. You needn't feel shy with anybody … any one as pretty as you. Yes, really, you are, Marie… Do you know your hair actually smells sweet.

MAID
Mr. Alfred…

YOUNG MAN
Don't make such a fuss, Marie… Anyway, I've already seen you otherwise. When I came home the other night and went to get some water, the door to your room was open … well…

MAID
(*Covering her face*) Oh, my, I didn't know that Mr. Alfred could be so wicked.

YOUNG MAN

I *saw* lots then … *that* … and *that* … that … and —

MAID
Oh, Mr. Alfred!

YOUNG MAN
Come, come … here … so — that's it…

MAID
But if the doorbell should ring now —

YOUNG MAN
Now forget that … we simply wouldn't open the door.

(*The bell rings*)

YOUNG MAN
Confound it… What a noise that fellow makes — Perhaps he rang before, and we didn't notice it.

MAID
Oh, no. I was listening all the while.

YOUNG MAN
Well, see what's the matter. Peek through the curtains.

MAID
Mr. Alfred … you are … no … such a bad man.

YOUNG MAN
Please go and see…
(*Exit* MAID)

YOUNG MAN
(*Opens the blinds quickly*)

MAID
(*Returns*) He must have gone away again. Anyway, no one is there now. Perhaps, it was Dr. Schueller.

YOUNG MAN
(*Annoyed*) Thank you.

MAID
(*Drawing close to him*)

YOUNG MAN
(*Evading her*) Listen, Marie, — I'm going to the café now.

MAID
(*Tenderly*) So soon … Mr. Alfred.

YOUNG MAN
(*Formally*) I am going to the café now… If Dr. Schueller should call —

MAID

He won’t come any more to-day.

YOUNG MAN

(*Severely*) If Dr. Schueller should come, I — I am in the café.

(*He goes to the adjoining room. The* MAID *takes a cigar from the smoking-stand, puts it in her blouse and goes out.*)

THE YOUNG MAN AND THE YOUNG WIFE



EVENING — A drawing-room furnished with cheap elegance in a house in Schwind street. The YOUNG MAN *has just come in; and, still wearing his hat and overcoat, he lights the gas. Then he opens a door to a side-room and looks in. The light from the drawing-room shimmers over the inlaid floor as far as the Louis Quinze bed, which stands against the opposite wall. A reddish light plays from the fire-place in the corner of the bedroom upon the hangings of the bed. The* YOUNG MAN *now inspects the bedroom. He takes an atomizer from the dressing-table, and sprays the bed-pillows with a fine rain of violet perfume. Then he carries the atomizer through both rooms, constantly pressing upon the bulb, so that soon the odor of violets pervades the place. He then takes off his hat and coat. He sits down in a blue velvet armchair, lights a cigarette, and smokes. After a short pause he rises again, and makes sure that the green shutters are closed. Suddenly, he goes into the bedroom, and opens a drawer in the dressing-table. He puts his hand in it, and finds a tortoise-shell hair-pin. He looks for a place to hide it, and finally puts it into a pocket of his overcoat. He opens the buffet in the drawing-room; takes a silver tray, with a bottle and two liqueur glasses, and puts them on the table. He goes back to his overcoat, and takes from it a small white package. Opening this, he places it beside the cognac. He goes again to the buffet, and takes two small plates and knives and forks. He takes a candied chestnut from the package and eats it. Then he pours himself a glass of cognac, and drinks it quickly. He then looks at his watch. He walks up and down the room. He stops a while before a large mirror, ordering his hair and small mustache with a pocket-comb. He next goes to the door of the vestibule and listens. Nothing is stirring. Then he closes the blue portières, which hang before the bedroom. The bell rings. He starts slightly. Then he sits down in the armchair, and rises only when the door has been opened and the* YOUNG WIFE *enters.*

YOUNG WIFE
(*Heavily veiled, closes the door behind her, pausing a moment with her left hand over her heart, as though mastering a strong emotion*)

YOUNG MAN
(*Goes toward her, takes her left hand, and presses a kiss on the white glove with black stitching. He says softly.*) Thank you.

YOUNG WIFE
Alfred — Alfred!

YOUNG MAN
Come, Madame… Come, Emma…

YOUNG WIFE
Let me be for a minute — please … oh, please, please, Alfred!
(*She is still standing at the door*)

YOUNG MAN
(*Standing before her, holding her hand*)

YOUNG WIFE
Where am I?

YOUNG MAN
With me.

YOUNG WIFE
This house is terrible, Alfred.

YOUNG MAN
Why terrible? It is a very proper house.

YOUNG WIFE
But I met two gentlemen on the staircase.

YOUNG MAN
Acquaintances of yours?

YOUNG WIFE

I don’t know. It’s possible.

YOUNG MAN
But, Madame — You surely know your friends!

YOUNG WIFE

I couldn’t see their faces.

YOUNG MAN
But even had they been your best friends — they couldn’t possibly have recognized you… I, myself … if I didn’t know it was you … this veil —

YOUNG WIFE
There are two.

YOUNG MAN
Won’t you come closer?… And take off your hat, at least?

YOUNG WIFE
What are you thinking of, Alfred? I promised you: Five minutes… Not a moment more … I swear it, no more —

YOUNG MAN
Well, then, your veil —

YOUNG WIFE
There are two of them.

YOUNG MAN
Very well, both of them — you will at least let me see your face.

YOUNG WIFE
Do you really love me, Alfred?

YOUNG MAN
(*Deeply hurt*) Emma! You ask me…

YOUNG WIFE
It's so warm here.

YOUNG MAN
You're still wearing your fur-coat — really, you will catch cold.

YOUNG WIFE
(*Finally enters the room, and throws herself into the armchair*) I'm tired — dead tired.

YOUNG MAN
Permit me.
(*He takes off her veil, removes her hat-pin, and puts hat, pin, and veil aside*)

YOUNG WIFE
(*Permits it*)

YOUNG MAN
(*Stands before her, and shakes his head*)

YOUNG WIFE
What is the matter?

YOUNG MAN
You've never been so beautiful.

YOUNG WIFE
How is that?

YOUNG MAN
Alone … alone with you — Emma —
(*He kneels down beside her chair, takes both her hands, and covers them with kisses*)

YOUNG WIFE
And now … now let me go again. I have done what you asked me to do.

YOUNG MAN
(*Lets his head sink into her lap*)

YOUNG WIFE

You promised me to be good.

YOUNG MAN
Yes.

YOUNG WIFE
It is stifling hot in this room.

YOUNG MAN
(*Gets up*) You still have your coat on.

YOUNG WIFE
Put it with my hat.

YOUNG MAN
(*Takes off her coat, and puts it on the sofa*)

YOUNG WIFE
And now — good-by —

YOUNG MAN
Emma —! Emma —!

YOUNG WIFE
The five minutes are long past.

YOUNG MAN
Not one yet! —

YOUNG WIFE
Alfred, tell me truly now, how late it is.

YOUNG MAN
It is now exactly a quarter past six.

YOUNG WIFE

I should have been at my sister's long ago.

YOUNG MAN
You can see your sister any time…

YOUNG WIFE
Oh, Merciful Heaven, Alfred, why did you tempt me to come?

YOUNG MAN
Because … I adore you, Emma!

YOUNG WIFE
To how many have you said the same thing?

YOUNG MAN
Since I met you, to no one.

YOUNG WIFE
What a foolish woman I am! If anybody had predicted … just a week ago … or even yesterday…

YOUNG MAN
But you had already promised me the day before yesterday.

YOUNG WIFE
You plagued me so. But I didn't want to do it. God is my witness — I didn't want to do it… Yesterday, I was firmly decided… Do you know I even wrote you a long letter last night?

YOUNG MAN

I didn't receive any.

YOUNG WIFE

I tore it up later. Oh, if only I had sent it to you.

YOUNG MAN
It is better as it is.

YOUNG WIFE
Oh, no, it's awful … of me. I don't understand myself. Good-by, Alfred, let me go.

YOUNG MAN
(*Seizes her, and covers her face with burning kisses*)

YOUNG WIFE
So … is that the way you keep your word…

YOUNG MAN
One more kiss — one more.

YOUNG WIFE
The last.
(*He kisses her, and she returns the kiss; their lips remain joined for a long time*)

YOUNG MAN
Shall I tell you something, Emma? It is now for the first time that I know what happiness is.

YOUNG WIFE
(*Sinks back into the armchair*)

YOUNG MAN
(*Sits on the arm of the chair, and puts one arm lightly about her neck*) … or rather, I know now what happiness might be.

YOUNG WIFE
(*Sighs deeply*)

YOUNG MAN
(*Kisses her again*)

YOUNG WIFE
Alfred — Alfred, what are you doing to me!

YOUNG MAN
Wasn't I right? — It isn't so awfully uncomfortable here… And we are so safe here. It's a thousand times better than those meetings outdoors…

YOUNG WIFE
Oh, don't remind me of them.

YOUNG MAN

I shall always recall them with a thousand delights. Every minute you have let me spend with you is a sweet memory.

YOUNG WIFE
Do you remember the ball at the Manufacturers' Club?

YOUNG MAN
Do I remember it…? I sat beside you through the whole supper — quite close to you. Your husband had champagne…

YOUNG WIFE
(*Looks at him with a hurt expression*)

YOUNG MAN

I meant to speak only of the champagne. Emma, would you like a glass of cognac?

YOUNG WIFE
Only a drop, but first give me a glass of water.

YOUNG MAN
Surely… But where is — oh, yes, I remember…
(*He opens the portières, and goes into the bedroom*)

YOUNG WIFE
(*Follows him with her eyes*)

YOUNG MAN
(*Comes back with a water-bottle and two glasses*)

YOUNG WIFE
Where have you been?

YOUNG MAN
In … the adjoining room.
(*Pours her a glass of water*)

YOUNG WIFE
Now I'm going to ask you something, Alfred — and you must tell me the truth.

YOUNG MAN

I swear —

YOUNG WIFE
Has there ever been any other woman in these rooms?

YOUNG MAN
But, Emma — this house was built twenty years ago! —

YOUNG WIFE
You know what I mean, Alfred … in these rooms, with you!

YOUNG MAN
With me — here — Emma! — It's not kind of you even to imagine such a thing.

YOUNG WIFE
Then there was … how shall I… But, no, I'd rather not ask. It is better that I shouldn't ask. It's my own fault. Every fault has its punishment.

YOUNG MAN
But what is wrong? What is the matter with you? What fault?

YOUNG WIFE
No, no, no, I mustn't think… Otherwise I would sink through the floor with shame.

YOUNG MAN
(*With the water-bottle in his hand, shakes his head sadly*) Emma, if you only knew how you hurt me.

YOUNG WIFE
(*Pours a glass of cognac*)

YOUNG MAN

I want to tell you something, Emma. If you're ashamed of being here — if you don't care for me — if you

don't feel you are all the happiness in the world for me — then you'd better go. —

YOUNG WIFE
Yes, I shall go.

YOUNG MAN
(*Taking hold of her hand*) But if you feel that I cannot live without you, that a kiss upon your hand means more to me than all the caresses of all the women in the whole world… Emma, I'm not like other young men, who are experienced in love-making — perhaps, I am too naïve … I…

YOUNG WIFE
But suppose you were like other young men?

YOUNG MAN
Then you wouldn't be here to-night — because you are not like other women.

YOUNG WIFE
How do you know that?

YOUNG MAN
(*Drawing her close beside him on the sofa*)

I have thought a lot about it. I know you are unhappy.

YOUNG WIFE
(*Pleased*) Yes.

YOUNG MAN
Life is so dreary, so empty — and then, — so short — so horribly short! There is only one happiness — to find some one who loves you. —

YOUNG WIFE
(*Takes a candied pear from the table, and puts it into her mouth*)

YOUNG MAN
Give me half of it!
(*She offers it to him with her lips*)

YOUNG WIFE
(*Catches the hands of the Young Man that threaten to stray*) What are you doing, Alfred?… Is that the way you keep your promise?

YOUNG MAN
(*Swallows the pear, then, more daringly*) Life is so short.

YOUNG WIFE
(*Weakly*) But that's no reason —

YOUNG MAN
(*Mechanically*) Oh, yes.

YOUNG WIFE
(*Still more weakly*) Alfred, you promised to be good … and then it's so light…

YOUNG MAN
Come, come, you only, only…
(*He lifts her from the sofa*)

YOUNG WIFE
What are you doing?

YOUNG MAN
It's not so light in the other room.

YOUNG WIFE
Is there another room?

YOUNG MAN
(*Drawing her with him*) A beautiful one … and quite dark.

YOUNG WIFE
We'd better stay in here.

YOUNG MAN
(*Already past the bedroom portières with her, loosening her waist*)

YOUNG WIFE
You are so… O merciful Heaven, what are you doing with me! — Alfred!

YOUNG MAN

I adore you, Emma!

YOUNG WIFE
So then wait, wait a little… (*Weakly*) Go… I'll call you.

YOUNG MAN
Let you help me — let us help you (*becoming confused*) … let … me — help — you.

YOUNG WIFE
But you'll tear everything.

YOUNG MAN
You have no corset on?

YOUNG WIFE

I never wear a corset. Odilon doesn't wear any either. But you can unbutton my shoes.

YOUNG MAN
(*Unbuttons her shoes and kisses her feet*)

YOUNG WIFE
(*Slips into bed*) Oh, how cold it is.

YOUNG MAN
It'll be warm in a minute.

YOUNG WIFE
(*Laughing softly*) Do you think so?

YOUNG MAN
(*Slightly hurt, to himself*) She ought not to have said that.
(*He undresses in the dark*)

YOUNG WIFE
(*Tenderly*) Come, come, come!

YOUNG MAN
(*Mollified*) In a minute, dear —

YOUNG WIFE
It smells like violets here.

YOUNG MAN
That's you… Yes (*To her*) you, yourself.

YOUNG WIFE
Alfred… Alfred!!!!

YOUNG MAN
Emma…

YOUNG MAN
Apparently I love you too much … yes… I am as if out of my senses.

YOUNG WIFE
… …

YOUNG MAN

I have been beside myself all these days. I was afraid of this.

YOUNG WIFE
Don't mind.

YOUNG MAN
Oh, certainly not. It's perfectly natural, if one…

YOUNG WIFE
No … don't… You are nervous. Calm yourself first.

YOUNG MAN
Do you know Stendhal?

YOUNG WIFE
Stendhal?

YOUNG MAN
The "Psychologie de l'amour."

YOUNG WIFE
No. Why do you ask me?

YOUNG MAN
There's a story in that book which is very much to the point.

YOUNG WIFE
What kind of a story?

YOUNG MAN
There is a gathering of cavalry officers —

YOUNG WIFE
Yes.

YOUNG MAN
And they are telling each other about their love affairs. And each one of them tells that with the woman he loved best — most passionately, you know … that with him, that then — well, in short, that the same thing happened just as it happened to me now.

YOUNG WIFE
Yes.

YOUNG MAN
That is very characteristic.

YOUNG WIFE
Yes.

YOUNG MAN
The story is not yet ended. One of them maintained … that this thing had never in his life happened to him, but, adds Stendhal — he was known as a great boaster.

YOUNG WIFE
And. —

YOUNG MAN
And, yet, it makes you feel blue — that's the stupid side of it, even though it's so unimportant.

YOUNG WIFE
Of course. Anyway, you know … you promised me to be good.

YOUNG MAN
Sh-h! Don't laugh. That doesn't help things any.

YOUNG WIFE
But no, I'm not laughing. That story of Stendhal's is really interesting. I have always thought that only older people … or people who … you know, people who have lived fast…

YOUNG MAN
The idea! That has nothing to do with it. By the way, I had completely forgotten the prettiest of Stendhal's stories. One of the cavalry officers went so far as to say that he stayed for three or even six nights… I don't remember now — that is he stayed with a woman, whom he wanted for weeks — *desirée* — you understand — and nothing happened all those nights except that they wept for happiness … both…

YOUNG WIFE
Both?

YOUNG MAN
Yes. Does that surprise you? It seems very comprehensible — especially when two people love each other.

YOUNG WIFE
But surely there are many who don't weep.

YOUNG MAN
(*Nervously*) Certainly … however, that is an exceptional case.

YOUNG WIFE
Oh — I thought Stendhal said that all cavalry officers weep on such an occasion.

YOUNG MAN
Look here, now you are laughing at me.

YOUNG WIFE
What an idea! Don't be childish, Alfred.

YOUNG MAN
Well, it makes me nervous anyway… Besides I have the feeling that you are thinking about it all the time. That embarrasses me still more.

YOUNG WIFE
I'm not thinking of it at all.

YOUNG MAN
If I were only sure that you love me.

YOUNG WIFE
Do you want still further proofs?

YOUNG MAN
Didn't I tell you … you are always laughing at me.

YOUNG WIFE
How so? Come, let me hold your sweet little head.

YOUNG MAN
Oh, that feels so good.

YOUNG WIFE
Do you love me?

YOUNG MAN
Oh, I'm so happy.

YOUNG WIFE
But you needn't cry about it.

YOUNG MAN
(*Moving away from her, highly irritated*) There! Again! I begged you not to…

YOUNG WIFE
To tell you that you shouldn't cry…

YOUNG MAN
You said: "You needn't cry about it."

YOUNG WIFE
You are nervous, sweetheart.

YOUNG MAN

I know.

YOUNG WIFE
But you ought not to be. It is beautiful even that … that we are together like good comrades…

YOUNG MAN
Now you are beginning again.

YOUNG WIFE
Don't you remember! That was one of our first talks. We wanted to be comrades, nothing more. Oh, how nice that was … at my sister's ball in January, during the quadrille… For heaven's sake, I should have gone long ago… My sister expects me — what shall I tell her… Good-by, Alfred —

YOUNG MAN
Emma! — You will leave me in this way!

YOUNG WIFE
Yes — so! —

YOUNG MAN
Five minutes more…

YOUNG WIFE
All right. Five minutes more. But you must promise me … not to move?… Yes?… I want to give you a good-by kiss… Psst … be still … don't move, I told you, otherwise I'll get up at once, you, my sweetheart, sweet…

YOUNG MAN
Emma … my ador… …

YOUNG WIFE
My Alfred!

YOUNG MAN
Oh, it is heaven to be with you.

YOUNG WIFE
But now I've really got to go.

YOUNG MAN
Oh, let your sister wait.

YOUNG WIFE

I must go home. It is much too late to see my sister. How late is it?

YOUNG MAN
How should I know?

YOUNG WIFE
You might look at your watch.

YOUNG MAN
My watch is in my waistcoat.

YOUNG WIFE
Get it.

YOUNG MAN
(*Gets up with a jump*) Eight o'clock.

YOUNG WIFE
(*Jumps up quickly*) For heaven's sake… Quick, Alfred, give me my stockings. What shall I say? They must be waiting for me at home … eight o'clock…

YOUNG MAN
When shall I see you again?

YOUNG WIFE
Never.

YOUNG MAN
Emma! Don't you love me any more?

YOUNG WIFE
Just for that reason. Give me my shoes.

YOUNG MAN
Never again? Here are your shoes.

YOUNG WIFE
My button-hook is in my bag. Please, be quick…

YOUNG MAN
Here is the button-hook.

YOUNG WIFE
Alfred, this may cost us our lives.

YOUNG MAN
(*Unpleasantly moved*) In what way?

YOUNG WIFE
What shall I say, if he asks me where I've been?

YOUNG MAN
At your sister's.

YOUNG WIFE
Oh, if I only could lie.

YOUNG MAN
Well, you'll have to.

YOUNG WIFE
Everything for a man like you. Oh, come here … let me give you a last kiss. (*She embraces him*) — And now

— leave me by myself, go in the other room. — I can't dress, if you are around.

YOUNG MAN
(*Goes into the drawing-room, where he dresses. He eats some pastry and drinks a glass of cognac*)

YOUNG WIFE
(*Calls after a while*) Alfred!

YOUNG MAN
Yes, sweetheart.

YOUNG WIFE
Isn't it better that we didn't weep?

YOUNG MAN
(*Smiling, not without pride*) How can you talk so frivolously? —

YOUNG WIFE
Oh, how difficult it will be now — if we should meet by chance in company?

YOUNG MAN
By chance? — sometime?… Surely you are coming to Lobheimer's to-morrow?

YOUNG WIFE
Yes. You too?

YOUNG MAN
Of course. May I ask for the cotillion?

YOUNG WIFE
Oh, I shall not go. What do you imagine? — I would… (*She enters the drawing-room fully dressed, and takes a piece of chocolate pastry*) sink through the floor.

YOUNG MAN
To-morrow at Lobheimer's. That's fine.

YOUNG WIFE
No, no… I shall decline … certainly decline —

YOUNG MAN
Well, the day after to-morrow … here.

YOUNG WIFE
The idea!

YOUNG MAN
At six…

YOUNG WIFE
There are cabs at this corner, aren't there?

YOUNG MAN
Yes, as many as you want. Well, the day after to-morrow, here at six o'clock. Please say "yes," sweetheart.

YOUNG WIFE
… We'll discuss that to-morrow night during the cotillion.

YOUNG MAN
(*Embracing her*) My angel.

YOUNG WIFE
Don't muss my hair again.

YOUNG MAN
Well then, to-morrow night at Lobheimer's, and the day after to-morrow in my arms.

YOUNG WIFE
Good-by…

YOUNG MAN
(*Suddenly anxious again*) And what will you — tell him to-night? —

YOUNG WIFE
Don't ask me … don't ask me … it's too terrible. — Why do I love you so? — Good-by — If I meet any one again on the stairway, I shall faint. — Ugh!

YOUNG MAN
(*Kisses her hand for the last time*)

YOUNG WIFE
(*Exit*)

YOUNG MAN
(*Remains standing. Then he sits down on the couch. He smiles reflectively, and says to himself*) Now, at last, I have an affair with a respectable woman.

THE YOUNG WIFE AND THE HUSBAND



A COMFORTABLE BEDROOM. *It is half past ten at night. The* WIFE *is lying abed and reading. The* HUSBAND *enters the room in a dressing gown.*

YOUNG WIFE
(*Without looking up*) You have stopped working?

HUSBAND
Yes. I'm too tired. And besides…

YOUNG WIFE
Well? —

HUSBAND
I felt so lonely at my desk all at once. A longing for you came over me.

YOUNG WIFE
(*Looking up*) Really?

HUSBAND
(*Sitting down on the bed beside her*) Don't read any more to-night. You will ruin your eyes.

YOUNG WIFE
(*Closing the book*) What's the matter with you?

HUSBAND
Nothing, child. I'm in love with you. But you know that.

YOUNG WIFE
One might almost forget it sometimes.

HUSBAND
One *must* forget it sometimes.

YOUNG WIFE
Why?

HUSBAND
Because, otherwise, marriage would be something imperfect. It would … how shall I express it … it would lose its sanctity.

YOUNG WIFE
Oh…

HUSBAND
Believe me — it is so… If we hadn't sometimes forgotten that we are in love with each other during the five years we have been married — we might not be in love any longer.

YOUNG WIFE
That's beyond me.

HUSBAND
The case is simply this. We have had perhaps ten or twelve love-affairs with each other… Doesn't it seem that way to you, too?

YOUNG WIFE

I haven't counted them!

HUSBAND
If we had enjoyed the first one to the last drop, if I had from the very beginning surrendered without restraint to my passion for you, the same thing would have happened to us that has happened to millions of other lovers. We would be tired of each other.

YOUNG WIFE
Ah … do you mean that?

HUSBAND
Believe me — Emma — in the early days of our marriage, I was afraid that this would happen.

YOUNG WIFE
I, too.

HUSBAND
See? Am I not right? Therefore, it is wise every now and then to live only as good friends.

YOUNG WIFE
Oh.

HUSBAND
And some can always experience new honeymoons, especially since I am careful never to let such weeks of honeymoon…

YOUNG WIFE
Run into months.

HUSBAND
That is true.

YOUNG WIFE
And now … now it seems we are at the end of another such period of friendship —?

HUSBAND
(*Pressing her tenderly to him*) So it might seem.

YOUNG WIFE
But if … if I should feel differently?

HUSBAND
You couldn't. You are the wisest and most delicious being in the world. I am very happy to have found you.

YOUNG WIFE
You know how to make love very well — every now and then.

HUSBAND
(*Who has also gone to bed*) Well, for a man who has looked about in the world a bit — come, lay your head on my shoulder — who has seen something of the world, marriage is really something much more mysterious than it is for you sheltered young girls. You come to us entirely innocent and … to a certain degree, at least, ignorant of things, and therefore you really understand the essence of love much better than we.

YOUNG WIFE
(*Laughing*) Oh!

HUSBAND
Certainly. For we get all tangled up by the many experiences that we have to go through before marriage. You women, of course, hear a lot of things, you know a lot of things, no doubt read too much, but you can't have any real idea of the things men experience. We men really become quite disgusted with this thing people call love, for the kind of creatures to which we are restricted really are…

YOUNG WIFE
Tell me — what kind of creatures are they?

HUSBAND
(*Kissing her on the forehead*) You ought to be glad, dear child, that you never have had a glimpse of relations like that. After all most of the poor things deserve pity — it is not for us to throw stones.

YOUNG WIFE
But — this pity — it doesn't seem quite appropriate to me.

HUSBAND
(*With gentle benevolence*) They deserve it. You young girls of good family, who wait quietly under the care of your parents for the man who desires you in marriage, — you won't know the misery that drives most of these poor creatures into the arms of sin.

YOUNG WIFE
Do all of them really sell themselves?

HUSBAND

I would hardly say that. I don't mean the material misery alone. There is also — one might call it — a moral misery, a lack of appreciation for what is permissible, and, especially, for what is noble.

YOUNG WIFE
But why are they to be pitied? — They seem to enjoy themselves.

HUSBAND
You have strange ideas, my child. You must not forget that such people are predestined by nature to sink lower and lower. There is no stopping them.

YOUNG WIFE
(*Cuddling to him*) It seems pleasant to fall.

HUSBAND
(*Hurt*) How can you say things like that, Emma? I should think that to good women like you, nothing could be more repulsive than those who are not!

YOUNG WIFE
Of course, Karl, of course. I was just thinking. Go on, tell me more. I like it when you talk like this. Tell me something.

HUSBAND
What? —

YOUNG WIFE
Why — about these people.

HUSBAND
The idea!

YOUNG WIFE
But, I asked you a long time ago — you know, when we were first married to tell me something of your younger days.

HUSBAND
Why does that interest you?

YOUNG WIFE
Aren't you my husband? Isn't it a sort of injustice that I really know nothing about your past?

HUSBAND
You surely don't think I have such bad taste, as to — No, Emma … it would be like a profanation.

YOUNG WIFE
And yet you have … heaven knows how many other women you have held in your arms, just as you are holding me now.

HUSBAND
Don't say "women." You are *the* woman.

YOUNG WIFE
But you must answer one question … otherwise … otherwise … there won't be any honeymoon.

HUSBAND
That's a nice way to talk … remember you are a mother … our little girl is sleeping in there…

YOUNG WIFE
(*Snuggling against him*) But I want a boy, too.

HUSBAND
Emma!

YOUNG WIFE
Don't be silly … of course, I am your wife … but I'd like also to be … to be your sweetheart.

HUSBAND
Would you?…

YOUNG WIFE
Well — now my question.

HUSBAND
(*Accommodating*) All right.

YOUNG WIFE
Was there … a married woman … amongst them?

HUSBAND
Why? What do you mean?

YOUNG WIFE
You know what I mean.

HUSBAND
(*Slightly disconcerted*) What makes you think of a thing like that?

YOUNG WIFE

I would like to know if … I mean — there are such women… I know that very well. But did you?…

HUSBAND
(*Seriously*) Do you know such a woman?

YOUNG WIFE
Well, I hardly know.

HUSBAND
Is there, perhaps, such a woman among your friends?

YOUNG WIFE
How can I be sure that there is — or that there isn't?

HUSBAND
Did any of your friends … women talk about a lot of things — alone among themselves — did any of them ever confess —?

YOUNG WIFE
(*Uncertainly*) No.

HUSBAND
Do you suspect any of your friends — that she…

YOUNG WIFE
Suspect … oh … suspect.

HUSBAND
It would seem so.

YOUNG WIFE
No, indeed, Karl, most certainly not. When I think things over — I don't believe there is any one.

HUSBAND
No one?

YOUNG WIFE
Not among my friends.

HUSBAND
Promise me something, Emma.

YOUNG WIFE
Well?

HUSBAND
That you will never associate with a woman about whom you have the slightest suspicion that she … doesn't lead a completely blameless life.

YOUNG WIFE
And you think it necessary for me to promise that?

HUSBAND

I know that you will not seek out the company of such women. But, it might happen that you … in fact it often happens that such women, whose reputations are not of the best, seek out good women, partly to give

them standing, and partly because they feel … how shall I say?… because they feel a certain homesickness for virtue.

YOUNG WIFE
Do they?

HUSBAND
Yes. I believe what I just said is very true. Homesickness for virtue. For all of these women are at heart very unhappy; you can believe that.

YOUNG WIFE
Why?

HUSBAND
You ask me, Emma? — How can you even ask? — Just imagine what a life these women lead! Full of lies, perfidy, vulgarity, and danger.

YOUNG WIFE
Yes, of course. You are right.

HUSBAND
Truly … they pay for their little happiness … their little…

YOUNG WIFE
Pleasure.

HUSBAND
Why “pleasure”? Why do you call it “pleasure”?

YOUNG WIFE
Well, — there must be something in it —! Otherwise, they wouldn’t do it.

HUSBAND
It is nothing … an intoxication.

YOUNG WIFE
(*Pensively*) An intoxication…

HUSBAND
No, it is not even intoxication. Like everything — it is dearly paid for, that much is certain.

YOUNG WIFE
Well … it has happened to you, hasn’t it?

HUSBAND
Yes, Emma. — And it is the thing I most regret.

YOUNG WIFE

Who was she? Tell me! Do I know her?

HUSBAND
The idea!

YOUNG WIFE
Was it long ago? Was it very long before you married me?

HUSBAND
Don’t ask me. Please, don’t ask.

YOUNG WIFE
But, Karl!

HUSBAND
She is dead.

YOUNG WIFE
Are you in earnest?

HUSBAND
Yes … it sounds almost ridiculous, but I have the feeling that all such women die young.

YOUNG WIFE
Did you love her very much?

HUSBAND
One doesn’t love women who lie.

YOUNG WIFE
Then why…

HUSBAND
An intoxication…

YOUNG WIFE
Really?

HUSBAND
Don’t talk about it any more, please. All that is passed long ago. I have only loved one woman — that is you. You only love where there is purity and truth.

YOUNG WIFE
Karl!

HUSBAND
Oh, how secure, how happy one feels in such arms. Why didn’t I know you as a child? I am sure I wouldn’t then even have looked at other women.

YOUNG WIFE
Karl!

HUSBAND
And how beautiful you are!… beautiful!… Oh, come…
(*He puts the light out*)

YOUNG WIFE
Do you know what I am thinking of to-night?

HUSBAND
What, sweetheart?

YOUNG WIFE
Of … of … of Venice.

HUSBAND
Our first night…

YOUNG WIFE
Yes…

HUSBAND
What then? Tell me!

YOUNG WIFE
You love me as much to-day.

HUSBAND
Yes, just as much.

YOUNG WIFE
Oh … if you would always…

HUSBAND
(*In her arms*) If I would what?

YOUNG WIFE
My Karl!

HUSBAND
What do you mean? If I would always?…

YOUNG WIFE
Well, yes.

HUSBAND
Well, what then, if I would always?…

YOUNG WIFE
Then I would always know that you love me.

HUSBAND
Yes. But you must know that anyway. One cannot always be a lover, sometimes one has to go out into the cold world to struggle and achieve! Don’t forget that, my child. There is a time for everything in marriage — that is the beauty of it. There are not many who can remember their Venice after five years.

YOUNG WIFE
True!

HUSBAND
And now … good-night, my child.

YOUNG WIFE
Good-night!

THE HUSBAND AND THE SWEET YOUNG MISS



A PRIVATE DINING-ROOM in the Riedhof, comfortably furnished with moderately good taste. A gas-grate is burning. The HUSBAND *and the* SWEET YOUNG MISS *are disclosed. The remains of dinner are on the table, cream-cakes, fruit, cheese. In the wine-glasses is a Hungarian white wine.*

HUSBAND
(*Is smoking a Havana cigar, and leaning against the corner of a sofa*)

MISS
(*Sits beside him in an armchair, eating the cream out of a cake with a spoon, and tasting it with satisfaction*)

HUSBAND
Is it good?

MISS
(*Without stopping*) Oh!

HUSBAND
Do you want another?

MISS
No. I've eaten too much already.

HUSBAND
Your wine is all gone.
(*He fills her glass*)

MISS
No … stop. I'll leave it anyway.

HUSBAND
Why are you so shy?

MISS
Am I? — Well, it takes time to get acquainted.

HUSBAND
Come and sit here with me.

MISS
Right away… I'm not ready yet.

HUSBAND
(*Rises and stands behind her chair, and puts his arms around her, turning her face toward him*)

MISS
What's the matter?

HUSBAND

I want a kiss.

MISS
(*Kissing him*) You are … excuse me, you have a lot of nerve.

HUSBAND
You're just finding that out?

MISS
Oh, no, I knew that long ago … from the first, in the street. — You must —

HUSBAND
What?

MISS
You must have a nice opinion of me.

HUSBAND
Why?

MISS
Because I went right away with you to a private dining room.

HUSBAND
Well, you can hardly say "right away."

MISS
But you asked in such a nice way.

HUSBAND
Do you think so?

MISS
And, after all, what is the harm?

HUSBAND
Of course.

MISS
Whether we go walking or —

HUSBAND
Besides, it's much too cold for walking.

MISS
Yes, it was too cold.

HUSBAND
But here it's nice and warm, isn't it?
(*He sits down again, puts his arms around the girl, and draws her to his side*)

MISS
(*Weakly*) Don't.

HUSBAND
Tell me… You noticed me before, didn't you?

MISS
Certainly. Several blocks before you spoke to me.

HUSBAND

I don't mean to-day. I mean yesterday and the day before, when I was following you.

MISS

A lot of people follow me.

HUSBAND

I don't doubt that. But did you notice me?

MISS
Guess … do you know what happened to me the other day? My cousin's husband followed me in the dark, and didn't recognize me.

HUSBAND
Did he speak to you?

MISS
What do you suppose? Do you imagine every one is as bold as you?

HUSBAND
But they sometimes do, don't they?

MISS
Of course, they do.

HUSBAND
Well, and what do you do?

MISS

Why nothing — I just don't answer.

HUSBAND
Hm-m … but you answered me.

MISS
Are you sorry?

HUSBAND
(*Kisses her violently*) Your lips taste like cream-cakes.

MISS
Oh, they are sweet by nature.

HUSBAND

I suppose many have told you that?

MISS
Many! What are you dreaming of?

HUSBAND
Now, be honest. How many have kissed this mouth before?

MISS
Why do you ask? You wouldn't believe me anyhow, if I told you.

HUSBAND
Why not?

MISS
Guess, then.

HUSBAND
All right, I'll guess — but you mustn't get angry!

MISS
Why should I get angry?

HUSBAND
Well, then, I'll guess … twenty.

MISS
(*Slipping away from him*) So — why not make it a hundred?

HUSBAND
Oh, I was just guessing.

MISS
You guessed badly.

HUSBAND
Say — ten.

MISS
(*Offended*) Oh, of course. A girl who lets a man talk to her on the street, and goes right away with him to a private dining-room!

HUSBAND
Don't be childish. Whether we walk about in the streets or sit in a room… We are in a restaurant. The waiter may come in at any moment — it doesn't signify anything at all…

MISS
That's just what I thought.

HUSBAND
Have you ever been in a private dining-room before?

MISS
If I must tell the truth — yes.

HUSBAND

I am glad that you are honest with me at least.

MISS
But it wasn't — no it wasn't the way you imagine. I was in a private dining-room with a friend and her fiancé, once during the carnival.

HUSBAND
It wouldn't have been anything tragic, if you had ever gone — with your sweetheart —

MISS
Of course, it wouldn't have been anything serious. But I haven't any sweetheart.

HUSBAND
Oh, come now.

MISS

I swear, I haven't.

HUSBAND
But you don't expect to make me believe that I…

MISS

Make you believe what?… I haven't any — at least, haven't had for six months.

HUSBAND

I see… But before then? Who was he?

MISS
Why are you so curious?

HUSBAND

I am curious because I love you.

MISS
Really?

HUSBAND
Of course! You should have noticed that. Tell me about him.
(*Presses her tightly to him*)

MISS
What do you want me to tell?

HUSBAND
Don't keep me in suspense so long. Who was he, that's what I want to know.

MISS
(*Laughing*) Just a man.

HUSBAND
Well — well — who?

MISS
He looked something like you.

HUSBAND
No!

MISS
If you hadn't looked so much like him —

HUSBAND
Well, what then?

MISS
Now, don't ask, don't you see that…

HUSBAND

(*Understanding*) That's why you let me speak to you.

MISS
Yes, that's it.

HUSBAND

I really don't know whether I ought to be pleased or angry.

MISS
If I were you, I'd be pleased.

HUSBAND
All right.

MISS
You also remind me of him the way you speak … and the way you look at one…

HUSBAND
What was he?

MISS
And then, the eyes —

HUSBAND
What was his name?

MISS
Please don't look at me that way; please don't.

HUSBAND
(*Embraces her. A long, burning kiss*)

MISS
(*Trembles, and tries to get up*)

HUSBAND
Why do you want to leave me?

MISS
It's time to go home.

HUSBAND
Later.

MISS
No, I really have to get home. What do you think mother will say.

HUSBAND
You live with your mother?

MISS
Of course, I live with my mother. What did you imagine?

HUSBAND
So — with your mother. Do you live alone with her?

MISS
Oh, yes, alone! There are five of us! Two boys and two more girls.

HUSBAND
Don’t sit so far away from me. Are you the oldest?

MISS
No, I’m the second. First comes Kitty. She’s working in a flower store. Then come I.

HUSBAND
Where do you work?

MISS

I stay at home.

HUSBAND
Always?

MISS
One of us has to stay home.

HUSBAND
Of course, — and what do you tell your mother, when you — come home so late?

MISS
That happens so seldom.

HUSBAND
Well, to-day, for example. Your mother will ask you, won’t she?

MISS
Of course, she’ll ask. It doesn’t matter how careful I am when I come home, she always wakes up.

HUSBAND
And what do you tell her?

MISS
Oh — that I’ve been to the theater.

HUSBAND
Does she believe that?

MISS
Why shouldn't she believe it? I often go to the theater. I saw an opera on Sunday with my friend and her fiancé, and my oldest brother.

HUSBAND
Where did you get the tickets?

MISS
My brother is a hairdresser.

HUSBAND
Oh, yes, a hairdresser … at the theater, I suppose?

MISS
Why are you asking so many questions?

HUSBAND
Because I am interested. What does your other brother do?

MISS
He's still going to school. He wants to become a teacher. Just imagine!

HUSBAND
And you also have a little sister?

MISS
Yes, she is a mere child, but you have to keep an eye on her all the time already. You have no idea how girls are spoiled at school. Just imagine! The other day I caught her keeping a date.

HUSBAND
Really?

MISS
Yes! She was out walking one evening at half-past seven with a boy from the school across the way. A mere child like her!

HUSBAND
And what did you do?

MISS

I gave her a spanking.

HUSBAND
Are you as strict as all that?

MISS
Well, who would be if I wasn't? My older sister is working and mother does nothing but grumble — everything always depends on me.

HUSBAND
You are a dear, sweet girl! (*Kisses her, and grows more tender*) You also remind me of some one.

MISS
So — of whom?

HUSBAND
Of no one in particular … of bygone days … of my youth. Come, drink, child!

MISS
How old are you?… You … why … I don't even know your name.

HUSBAND
Karl.

MISS
Is it possible? Your name is Karl?

HUSBAND
Was his name also Karl?

MISS
No, but that's the queer thing … that is … the eyes … (*shaking her head*) the way you look at me…

HUSBAND
And who was he? — You haven't told me yet.

MISS
Oh, he was a bad man — that's sure, otherwise he wouldn't have gone away.

HUSBAND
Did you love him very much?

MISS
Of course, I loved him.

HUSBAND

I know what he was — a lieutenant.

MISS
No, he wasn't in the army. He couldn't pass the examinations. His father owns a house in … but why do you have to know?

HUSBAND
(*Kisses her*) You have gray eyes. I thought, at first, they were black.

MISS
Well aren't they pretty enough?

HUSBAND
(*Kisses her eyes*)

MISS
Don't please — I can't bear it… O, please don't … let me get up … only for a moment — please.

HUSBAND
(*More tenderly still*) No, indeed.

MISS
But, please, Karl…

HUSBAND
How old are you? — eighteen — isn't it?

MISS
Just past nineteen.

HUSBAND
Nineteen … and I —

MISS
You are thirty…

HUSBAND
And a little more — Don't let's talk about it.

MISS
He was thirty-two, when I first met him.

HUSBAND
How long ago was that?

MISS

I don't remember… Listen, there must have been something in the wine.

HUSBAND
What makes you think so?

MISS

I am quite … see — everything is turning round about me.

HUSBAND
Then hold tight to me. So… (*He holds her close to him, and becomes more and more tender. She hardly resists*) I'll tell you something, dear, we might go now.

MISS
Yes … home.

HUSBAND
Well, not exactly home…

MISS
What do you mean?… O, no — no… I won't go anywhere else. What do you think I am?

HUSBAND
But listen to me, child — the next time we meet, you know, we will arrange it so that … (*He has slipped to the floor with his head in her lap*) This is so comfy, oh, so comfy!

MISS
What are you doing? (*She kisses his hair*) Something must have been in that wine — I'm so sleepy … what would happen, if I couldn't get up again? But, but — look, but Karl … if some one should come in … please … the waiter.

HUSBAND
No … waiter … will ever come in … here…

MISS
(*Leaning with closed eyes in the corner of the sofa*)

HUSBAND
(*Pacing up and down the little room, after having lighted a cigarette*)
(*Long silence*)

HUSBAND
(*Looking for a long time at the girl; speaking to himself*) Who knows what sort of a person she really is — Confound it … so quickly … that wasn't very cautious of me … hm-m…

MISS
(*Without opening her eyes*) There must have been something in the wine.

HUSBAND
Why?

MISS
Otherwise…

HUSBAND
Why do you blame everything on the wine?…

MISS
Where are you? Why do you stay so far away? Come to me.

HUSBAND
(*Sits beside her*)

MISS
Now tell me if you really love me.

HUSBAND
But you know that… (*He interrupts himself quickly*) Of course.

MISS
Listen… There must have … come, tell me the truth, what was in the wine.

HUSBAND
Well, do you think I … I would drug your wine?

MISS
Well, see, I can't understand it. I'm really not that kind… We've known each other only since… Dear, I'm not that kind … honestly, I'm not — if you think that of me —

HUSBAND
Well — why worry about that? I don't think anything bad of you. I only think that you love me.

MISS
Yes…

HUSBAND
After all, when two young people are alone in a room, and have dinner, and drink wine … there doesn't need to be anything in the wine.

MISS

I merely said it to say something.

HUSBAND
But, why?

MISS
(*Almost defiantly*) Because I was ashamed.

HUSBAND
How absurd! There is no reason to be. Especially, since I made you think of your first sweetheart.

MISS
Yes.

HUSBAND
Your *first* sweetheart.

MISS
Yes, yes…

HUSBAND
Now I should like to know who the others were.

MISS
There weren't any.

HUSBAND
That is not true, it can't be true.

MISS
Oh, please, don't tease me.

HUSBAND
Would you like a cigarette?

MISS
No, thanks.

HUSBAND
Do you know how late it is?

MISS
Well?

HUSBAND
Half-past eleven.

MISS
Really?

HUSBAND
Well … and your mother? She's used to this, is she?

MISS
Do you really want to send me home?

HUSBAND
But earlier in the evening you yourself wanted —

MISS
You are quite changed. What have I done to you?

HUSBAND
But, child, what is the matter with you, what do you imagine?

MISS
And it was only your looks, believe me, or you would have had to wait … many men have asked me to go with them to a private dining-room.

HUSBAND
Well, would you like … to come here again with me soon … or rather somewhere else?

MISS

I don't know.

HUSBAND
What do you mean by, "I don't know"?

MISS
Well, why don't you make a date?

HUSBAND
When? First of all, I must explain that I do not live in Vienna. I am only here for a few days' visit now and then.

MISS
Oh, you're not a Viennese?

HUSBAND
Yes, I am a Viennese. But I am living out of town now…

MISS
Where?

HUSBAND
Oh, well, that doesn't matter.

MISS
Oh, don't be frightened, I won't come to see you.

HUSBAND
If it would give you any pleasure you may come. I live in Graz.

MISS
Honestly?

HUSBAND
Yes, why does that surprise you?

MISS
You are married, aren't you?

HUSBAND
(*Greatly surprised*) What makes you think that?

MISS

I just got the impression.

HUSBAND
And you wouldn't mind that at all?

MISS
Well, I would rather that you were single. — So you are married! —

HUSBAND
But, tell me first what made you think of that?

MISS
If a man says he doesn't live in Vienna, and he doesn't always have time —

HUSBAND
But that's not so improbable.

MISS

I don't believe it.

HUSBAND
And wouldn't it hurt your conscience to have caused a married man to become unfaithful?

MISS
Oh, my, no doubt your wife acts just like you.

HUSBAND
(*Very indignant*) That will do. No more of such remarks.

MISS

I thought you didn't have a wife.

HUSBAND
Whether I have one or not — such remarks are uncalled for.
(*He has risen*)

MISS
But Karl, Karl, what is the matter? Are you angry? I really didn't know that you were married. I was just talking. Come, don't be angry.

HUSBAND
(*Comes back to her after a few minutes*) You are strange creatures, you … women.
(*He becomes tender again*)

MISS
Stop … don't … it's too late now.

HUSBAND
Well, listen to me a minute. Let's talk seriously. I would like to see you again, to see you often.

MISS
Would you?

HUSBAND
But one thing is necessary … that I can depend upon you. I can't look out for you.

MISS
Oh, I can look out for myself.

HUSBAND
You are … well, I can't just say inexperienced — but, you are young — and — men in general are pretty unscrupulous.

MISS
Oh, my!

HUSBAND

I don't mean on the moral side only. — Well, you know what I mean —

MISS
Tell me, what do you think I am?

HUSBAND
Look here — if you want me — me only — we can easily arrange it — even if I do generally live in Graz. In a place like this where some one may come in at any moment, it isn't very comfortable.

MISS
(*Snuggles up to him*)

HUSBAND
Next time … we shall go somewhere else, won't we?

MISS

Yes.

HUSBAND
Where we may be entirely alone.

MISS
Yes.

HUSBAND
(*Embracing her passionately*) We'll discuss the rest on the way home. (*He rises, and opens the door*) Waiter … the bill!

THE SWEET YOUNG MISS AND THE POET



A SMALL ROOM, *furnished with taste and comfort. Red curtains half-darken the room. A large writing-table strewn with books and papers. A piano against the wall. The* SWEET YOUNG MISS *and the* POET *are disclosed. They are just entering. The* POET *closes the door.*

POET
(*Kisses her*) My darling!

MISS
(*With hat and coat*) Oh! It's very pretty here! Only you can't see anything!

POET
Your eyes will have to get used to this semi-darkness. — Those sweet eyes —
(*Kisses her eyes*)

MISS
But there won't be time enough.

POET
Why not?

MISS
Because I can only stop a moment.

POET
But, you can take your hat off, can't you?

MISS
Just for the sake of a minute?

POET
(*Takes the pin out of her hat which he removes*)
And your coat —

MISS
The idea! — I have to leave right away.

POET
But you must rest a while first. We have been walking for three hours.

MISS
Riding, you mean.

POET

Yes, we rode home — but we ran around for a full three hours in the country. Now come, sit down, child … wherever you like — here at my desk; — no, that's not comfortable. Sit down on the sofa. — That's it. (*He presses her down*) If you are very tired, you may as well lie down. So. (*He stretches her out on the sofa*) There, put your head on the cushion.

MISS
(*Laughing*) But I'm not tired at all!

POET
You merely imagine you're not. So — and if you are sleepy, you can go to sleep. I shall be very quiet. And what's more I can play you a lullaby … one of my own…
(*He goes to the piano*)

MISS
One of yours.

POET
Yes.

MISS
But I thought, Robert, you were a professor.

POET
I? But I told you I was a writer. But what made you think of that?

MISS
Because you said the piece you are playing is your own.

POET
Yes … perhaps it is, perhaps it isn't. But that doesn't matter. Well? Anyway it doesn't matter who composed it, if only it is beautiful. Don't you agree?

MISS
Of course … it must be beautiful … that's the chief thing! —

POET
Do you know what I meant by that?

MISS
By what?

POET
By what I just said.

MISS
(*Sleepily*) Of course I do.

POET
(*Gets up, goes to her, and strokes her hair*) You didn't understand a word.

MISS
I'm not as stupid as that.

POET
Certainly you are, but that is just the reason why I love you. It is so beautiful, when girls are stupid. I mean in the way you are.

MISS
Go on, you are talking nonsense.

POET
Angel, little one! Isn't it comfy on this soft, Persian couch cover?

MISS
Indeed, it is. Won't you play something else on the piano?

POET
No, I'd rather stay near you.
(*Caressing her*)

MISS
But hadn't you better light the lamp?

POET
Oh, no… The dim light is so restful. We were as if bathed in sunbeams all day. Now we've just climbed out of the bath and slipped on … the twilight like a bathrobe — (*Laughs*) No — that ought to be expressed differently… Don't you think so?

MISS

I don't know.

POET
(*Moves slightly away from her*) Absolutely divine, this stupidity!
(*He takes out a notebook, and writes a few words in it*)

MISS
What are you doing? (*She turns toward him*) What are you writing?

POET
(*Softly*) Sun, bath, twilight, cloak … so… (*He puts the notebook back. Aloud*) Nothing… Now tell me, sweetheart, wouldn't you like something to eat or drink?

MISS

I'm not thirsty, but I am hungry.

POET
Hm … it would suit me better, if you were thirsty. I have some cognac at home, but I have to send out for food.

MISS
Can't you send somebody?

POET
That is difficult, my servant isn't here now — but, wait a minute — I will go myself … what would you like?

MISS
Oh, really don't bother; I have to go home anyway.

POET
Child, that's out of the question. Now I will tell you something; when we leave, we will go together somewhere for supper.

MISS
Oh, no. I haven't time for that. And, then, where could we go? Somebody we know might see us.

POET
Do you know such a lot of people?

MISS
Well, it takes only one to make trouble for us.

POET
Why trouble?

MISS
Well, suppose mother should hear about it…

POET
We can go somewhere, where no one can see us. There are plenty of restaurants with private dining-rooms.

MISS
(*Singing*) "Let's dine in a chambre separée!"

POET
Have you ever been in a private dining-room?

MISS
To tell the truth — yes.

POET
Who was the happy man?

MISS
Oh, it wasn't the way you imagine… I went with a friend and her fiancé. They took me along.

POET
And you expect me to believe that?

MISS
You needn't believe it!

POET
(*Close to her*) Did you blush? You can hardly see anything. I can't even distinguish your features. (*He touches her cheeks with his hands*) But even so I recognize you.

MISS
Well, be careful that you don't take me for some one else.

POET
It is strange, I don't seem to remember how you look.

MISS
Thank you!

POET
(*Seriously*) It is almost uncanny. I can't imagine any longer how you look — In a certain way I have already forgotten you — Now, if I couldn't remember even the sound of your voice … what would you do then? — Something near and far away at the same time … it's uncanny.

MISS
What are you talking about?

POET
Nothing, my angel, nothing. Where are your lips?…
(*He kisses her*)

MISS
Wouldn't it be better to light the lamp?

POET
No… (*Very tenderly*) Tell me, do you love me?

MISS
Very much … oh, so much!

POET
Have you ever loved any one as much as me?

MISS

I told you already that I didn't.

POET
But…
(*He sighs*)

MISS
He was my fiancé.

POET
I'd rather you wouldn't think of him now.

MISS
Why … what's the difference … look…

POET
We might imagine now that we were in a palace in India.

MISS
I'm sure people there wouldn't be as wicked as you are.

POET
How idiotic! Perfectly divine — Ah, if you only know what you are to me…

MISS
Well?

POET
Don't always push me away, I'm not going to hurt you —

MISS
My corset hurts me.

POET
(*Simply*) Take it off.

MISS
Yes. But you must behave.

POET
Of course!

MISS
(*Rises, and takes off her corset in the darkness*)

POET
(*Sits in the meantime on the sofa*) Tell me, aren't you at all curious to know my name?

MISS
Yes, what is it?

POET
I'd rather not tell you my real name, but the name I go by.

MISS
What is the difference?

POET

I mean the name I use as a writer.

MISS
Oh, you don't write under your real name?

POET
(*Close to her*)

MISS
Oh … stop … don't.

POET
What fragrance! How sweet.
(*He kisses her breasts*)

MISS
You are tearing my chemise.

POET
Away with it … away with it … everything is superfluous.

MISS
Oh, Robert.

POET
And now enter into our Indian palace.

MISS
Tell me first — do you really love me?

POET

I adore you. (*Kisses her passionately*) I adore you, my sweetheart, my springtime … my…

MISS
Robert … Robert…

POET
It was heaven… My name is…

MISS
Robert — oh, my Robert!

POET

I call myself Biebitz.

MISS
Why do you call yourself Biebitz?

POET
My name is not Biebitz — I just use it as a pseudonym … well, don't you recognize the name?

MISS
No.

POET
You don't know the name Biebitz? Ah — Perfectly divine! Really? You are just pretending you don't know it, aren't you?

MISS
No really, I never heard it.

POET
Don't you ever go to the theater?

MISS
Oh, yes — I was at the opera only the other day with — you know, with one of my friends and her uncle, to hear Cavalleria Rusticana.

POET
Hm, you don't go then to see plays.

MISS

I never get tickets for them.

POET
I'll send you a ticket soon.

MISS
Oh, do! And don't forget it. But for something funny.

POET
Oh … something funny … you don't care to see anything sad?

MISS
Not very much.

POET
Not even if it is a play of mine.

MISS

A play of yours? Do you write for the theater?

POET
Let me light a candle now. I haven't seen you since you have become my best beloved — Angel!
(*He lights a candle*)

MISS
Don't. I'm ashamed. Give me a cover at least.

POET
Later!
(*He approaches her with the light, and looks at her a long while*)

MISS
(*Covering her face with her hands*) Go away, Robert!

POET
You are beautiful, you are Beauty itself. You are Nature herself. You are the simplicity which is holy.

MISS
Ouch! You are dropping wax on me. Look, why aren't you more careful?

POET
(*Puts the candle away*) You are that for which I have long sought. You love me for my own sake. You would love me even if I were only a counter-jumper. That's balm to one's heart. I must confess I was suspicious until this moment. Tell me, honestly, you didn't have any notion that I am Biebitz?

MISS
Oh, pshaw, I don't even know what you are talking about. I never heard of any Biebitz.

POET
What is fame! No, forget what I have told you. Forget even the name. I am Robert and I want to remain Robert to you. I was only joking. (*Lightly*) I am not a writer at all. I'm a clerk, and in the evening I play the piano in a dancehall.

MISS
But now I'm all mixed up … and the way you look at one. What is the matter, yes, what do you mean?

POET

It is very strange — something that has never happened to me, sweetheart; I am on the verge of tears. You move me deeply. We ought to live together. Will you? We will be very much in love with each other.

MISS
Is it true about the dancehall?

POET
Yes, but don't ask any more about it. If you love me, don't ask me anything. Tell me, can't you get away for a few weeks?

MISS
How do you mean get away?

POET
Well, I mean, leave home?

MISS
How absurd! How could I! What would mother say? And without me everything would be topsy-turvy at home in no time.

POET
It would be so wonderful to live with you a few weeks, all alone with you, somewhere far away, in the forest, in the world of nature… Nature. And then, some day, "Good-by" — each going, without the other knowing where.

MISS
You are talking already about saying good-by. And I thought that you loved me such a lot.

POET
That is just the reason — (*Bends over her, and kisses her upon the forehead.*) You sweet darling!

MISS
Please, hold me tight. I feel so cold.

POET

I fancy it's time for you to dress. Wait, I'll light a few more candles for you.

MISS
(*Rising*) Don't look this way.

POET
No. (*At the window*) Tell me, child, are you happy?

MISS
What do you mean?

POET

I mean are you happy the way things are in general?

MISS
Well, they might be better.

POET
You misunderstand me. You have told me enough about your conditions at home. I know you are not a princess. Leaving all that aside, do you feel alive. Do you feel life pulsing through you?

MISS
Come, have you a comb?

POET
(*Goes to the dressing-table, hands her a comb, and watches her*) Good Lord, how lovely you look!

MISS
Please … don't!

POET
Please, stay a while yet. I'll get something for supper, and…

MISS
But it is awfully late already.

POET
It is not yet nine.

MISS
Dear me, I must hurry. Please!

POET
When shall I see you again?

MISS
When would you like to see me?

POET
To-morrow.

MISS
What day is to-morrow?

POET
Saturday.

MISS
Oh, then I can't. I must take my little sister to her guardian.

POET
Then Sunday … hm … Sunday … on Sunday … now I'll have to explain something to you. — I'm not Biebitz, but Biebitz is a friend of mine. I'll introduce him to you sometime. Biebitz's play will be given Sunday. I'll send you tickets, and take you home after the performance. You will tell me then how you liked the play. Won't you?

MISS
Here you are talking about this Biebitz again. — I don't understand what it is all about.

POET

I won't know you really, until I know what impression the play made on you.

MISS
Now … I'm ready.

POET
Come, sweetheart.
(*They go out*)

THE POET AND THE ACTRESS



A ROOM IN *an inn in the country. It is an evening in spring; moonlight floods the meadows and hills; the windows are open. A deep silence reigns. The* POET *and the* ACTRESS *enter, and as they cross the threshold, the candle which the* POET *is carrying in his hand is blown out.*

POET
Oh…

ACTRESS
What's the matter?

POET
The candle. — But we don't need any. Look, how light it is. Wonderful!

ACTRESS
(*Sinks suddenly down at the window with her hands folded*)

POET
What's the matter with you?

ACTRESS
(*Remains silent*)

POET
(*Going to her*) What are you doing?

ACTRESS
(*Indignant*) Can't you see that I am praying? —

POET
Do you believe in God?

ACTRESS
Of course I do; I am not a fool.

POET
Oh, I see!

ACTRESS
Come, kneel down beside me. It will do you good to pray just once. None of the gems will drop out of your crown.

POET
(*Kneels beside her, and puts his arm around her waist*)

ACTRESS
Libertine! — (*Rises*). And do you know to whom I prayed?

POET
To God, I suppose.

ACTRESS
(*With deep sarcasm*) Oh, of course! It was to you to whom I prayed.

POET
Then why did you look out of the window?

ACTRESS
Tell me rather where you have lured me.

POET
But, child, it was your idea. You wanted to go to the country — and picked out this very place.

ACTRESS
Well, wasn't I right?

POET
Certainly. It's charming here. When you consider that we are just two hours from Vienna — complete solitude. And delightful scenery!

ACTRESS
Isn't it? If you had any real talent, this place might inspire you to write.

POET
Have you been here before?

ACTRESS
Have I been here before? Indeed I have! I have lived here for years.

POET
With whom?

ACTRESS
With Dick, of course.

POET
Oh, really!

ACTRESS
How I adored that man! —

POET
You've told me all about that already.

ACTRESS

I am sorry — I can go away again, if I bore you!

POET
You bore me?… You can't imagine what you mean to me… You are a whole world in itself… You are divine, you are a genius… You are the simplicity which is holy… Yes, you… But you oughtn't to talk about Dick now.

ACTRESS
That was merely a slip! Well! —

POET

I am glad that you feel that way.

ACTRESS
Come, give me a kiss!

POET
(*Kisses her*)

ACTRESS
But now we had better say good night. Good night, darling!

POET
What do you mean by that?

ACTRESS

I mean, I am going to lie down and go to sleep.

POET
Yes, — that's very well, but when it comes to saying "good night" … where do I sleep?

ACTRESS
There are surely a lot of other rooms in this house.

POET
But they don't appeal to me. Don't you think I had better light a candle now?

ACTRESS
Yes.

POET
(*Lights a candle, which stands upon the dressing-table*) What a charming room … and what pious people they must be. Pictures of saints everywhere… It would be interesting to spend some time among people like this … quite another world. How little we know of the lives of others!

ACTRESS
Don’t talk nonsense, but just give me the bag from the table.

POET
Here, beloved!

ACTRESS
(*Takes a small framed picture out of the hand-bag and puts it on the dressing-table*)

POET
What’s that?

ACTRESS
That’s the Virgin.

POET
Do you always carry her around with you?

ACTRESS
She is my talisman. And now go, Robert!

POET
You are joking? Can’t I help you?

ACTRESS
No, you must go now.

POET
And when may I return?

ACTRESS
In ten minutes.

POET
(*Kisses her*) Au revoir!

ACTRESS
Where will you go?

POET

I shall walk up and down under your window. I love to wander about outdoors at night time. My finest inspirations come to me that way. And especially near you, under the breath of your longing, I might call it … entwined in your art.

ACTRESS
You talk like an idiot…

POET
(*Hurt*) There are women who might say … like a poet.

ACTRESS
Oh, well, but do go now. But don't start to flirt with the waitress. —

POET
(*Goes*)

ACTRESS
(*Undresses. She hears the* POET *going down the wooden stairway, and, then hears his footsteps below her window. As soon as she is undressed, she goes to the window and looks down to where he stands waiting. She calls to him in a whisper*) Come!

POET
(*Comes quickly upstairs and runs toward her. She in the meantime has gone to bed, and extinguished the light. He locks the door*)

ACTRESS
So, now you may sit down beside me, and tell me a story.

POET
(*Sits down on the bed beside her*) Hadn't I better close the window? Isn't it too cold for you?

ACTRESS
Oh, no!

POET
Now, what shall I tell you?

ACTRESS
Tell me to whom you are unfaithful at this moment?

POET
I'm sorry, I'm not unfaithful yet.

ACTRESS
Well, if it's any satisfaction to you, I am unfaithful to some one too.

POET
So I can imagine.

ACTRESS
And who do you suppose it is?

POET
But, child, how do you expect me to know?

ACTRESS
Guess, then.

POET
Wait … your manager.

ACTRESS
My dear man, I'm not a chorus-girl.

POET
Well, I am only guessing.

ACTRESS
Guess again.

POET
Then it's your leading-man … Benno —

ACTRESS
Nonsense! He doesn't care for women at all … didn't you know that? He carries on with his postman!

POET
No, really! —

ACTRESS
Now come, kiss me.

POET
(*Embraces her*)

ACTRESS
But what are you doing?

POET
Why do you torment me so?

ACTRESS
Listen, Robert, I have a suggestion to make to you. Come lie down in bed with me.

POET

I accept.

ACTRESS
Come quickly, come quickly!

POET
Yes … if I had had my way, I would have been there long ago… Listen…

ACTRESS
What?

POET
The crickets are chirping outside.

ACTRESS
You are crazy, child, there are no crickets here.

POET
But surely you hear them.

ACTRESS
Hurry up.

POET
(*Beside her*) Here I am.

ACTRESS
Now lie quite still… Sh … don't move…

POET
Yes, but why?

ACTRESS
You would rather like to have an affair with me?

POET

I should think that's obvious by now.

ACTRESS
There are many who would like that…

POET
But it would seem that at the moment the odds are on my side…

ACTRESS
Then, come, my cricket! I shall call you "cricket" from now on.

POET
All right…

ACTRESS
Now, tell me, whom am I deceiving?

POET
Whom?… Perhaps me…

ACTRESS
Child, you have softening of the brain.

POET
Or some one … some one whom you have never seen … some one, whom you don't even know, some one — who is predestined for you and whom you will never find…

ACTRESS
Please don't talk such magnificent nonsense.

POET
… Isn't it strange … you too — and yet one could think. — But no, it would destroy the best in you, if one should … come, come — come. —

ACTRESS
That's better than acting in idiotic plays… Don't you think so?

POET
Well, it seems to me, that it is a good thing you sometimes have to act in an intelligent one.

ACTRESS
You conceited puppy. I suppose you are thinking of one of your own plays again.

POET
Yes, I am.

ACTRESS
(*Seriously*) It is really a splendid play!

POET
Well, then!

ACTRESS
You are a great genius, Robert!

POET
And you might also tell me now why you didn't turn up the day before yesterday. There was absolutely nothing the matter with you.

ACTRESS
Well, I wanted to annoy you.

POET
But why? What have I done to you? —

ACTRESS
You were over-bearing.

POET
In what way?

ACTRESS
Everybody at the theater thinks you are.

POET
Really.

ACTRESS
But I told them, he has a perfect right to be over-bearing.

POET
And what did they say?

ACTRESS
What could they say? I am not on speaking-terms with any of them.

POET
Oh, I see.

ACTRESS
They would like nothing better than to poison me, every one of them. But they won't succeed.

POET
Don't think now of others. Let's be happy that we are here together, and tell me that you love me.

ACTRESS
What further proof can you want?

POET
It's a thing that can't be proven anyway.

ACTRESS

I like that! What else do you want?

POET
How many are there that you have tried to convince in this way … did you love all of them?

ACTRESS
No, I have loved only one.

POET
(*Embraces her*) My…

ACTRESS
Dick.

POET
My name is Robert. What can I mean to you, if you are thinking of Dick, now?

ACTRESS
You are a mood of mine.

POET

I am pleased to know it.

ACTRESS
Well, tell me, aren't you proud?

POET
Why should I be proud?

ACTRESS
It seems to me that you have good reason to be.

POET
Oh, because of that.

ACTRESS
Yes, because of that, my little cricket! — What about the chirping? Are they still chirping?

POET
All the time. Don't you hear them?

ACTRESS
Of course, I hear them. But, child, those are frogs.

POET
You are wrong. Frogs croak.

ACTRESS
Of course, they croak.

POET
But this is not croaking, child, this is chirping.

ACTRESS
You are about the most stubborn person I have ever met. Kiss me, froggie.

POET
Please don't call me that. It gets on my nerves.

ACTRESS
Well, what shall I call you?

POET
My name is Robert.

ACTRESS
Oh, but that's stupid.

POET
But won't you please call me simply by my own name?

ACTRESS
Well, then, Robert, give me a kiss… Ah! (*She kisses him*) Now, are you satisfied, froggie?

POET
May I light a cigarette?

ACTRESS
Give me one too. (*He takes his cigarette-case from the dressing-table; takes two cigarettes out; lights both, and gives her one*) By the way, you haven't said a word about my performance yesterday.

POET
What performance?

ACTRESS
Well.

POET
Oh, yes. I wasn't at the theater.

ACTRESS
You are joking.

POET
Not in the least. When you didn't turn up the day before, I assumed you hadn't fully recovered yesterday, and so I decided not to go.

ACTRESS
You missed something wonderful.

POET
Yes.

ACTRESS
It was a sensation. The people actually grew pale.

POET
You saw that?

ACTRESS

Benno said: Child, you acted divinely.

POET
Hm!… And so ill the day before.

ACTRESS
Indeed I was. And do you know why? Because I felt such a longing for you.

POET

A little while ago you said that you stayed away just to annoy me.

ACTRESS
But what do you know about my love for you? Everything leaves you cold. And I have been delirious for nights. In a high fever — hundred and four degrees.

POET
Rather high for a mood.

ACTRESS
You call that a mood? I am dying for love of you, and you call it a mood —?

POET
And Dick…?

ACTRESS
Dick?… Don’t talk to me about that galley-slave! —

THE ACTRESS AND THE COUNT



THE BEDROOM OF the ACTRESS*, luxuriously furnished. It is midday. The curtains are still down; a candle is burning on the dressing-table. The* ACTRESS *is disclosed in her four-poster bed. Many newspapers are strewn about on the cover. The* COUNT *in the uniform of a captain of the Dragoons enters. He remains standing at the door.*

ACTRESS
Ah, Count.

COUNT
Your mother said I might, otherwise I would not —

ACTRESS
Please, come closer.

COUNT

I kiss your hand. Pardon me — when you come in from the street … I can't see a thing yet. So … here we are (*at her bed*). I kiss your hand.

ACTRESS
Please sit down, Count.

COUNT
Your mother said, My daughter isn't well… Nothing serious, I hope.

ACTRESS
Nothing serious? I was on the verge of death.

COUNT
Oh, dear, oh, dear, is it possible?

ACTRESS
It is very good of you to have taken the trouble to call.

COUNT
On the verge of death! And only last night you acted divinely.

ACTRESS
It was a great triumph, wasn't it?

COUNT
Tremendous!… The audience was carried away. I won't say anything about myself.

ACTRESS
Thanks, for the beautiful flowers.

COUNT
Nothing at all, Mademoiselle.

ACTRESS
(*Indicating with her eyes a large flower-basket, which stands on a little table near the window*) There they are.

COUNT
You were literally overwhelmed with flowers and wreaths yesterday.

ACTRESS
They are still in my dressing-room. All I brought home was your flowers.

COUNT
(*Kissing her hand*) How sweet of you.

ACTRESS
(*Suddenly seizes his hand, and kisses it*)

COUNT
But, Mademoiselle.

ACTRESS
Don't be frightened, Count, it doesn't put you under any obligations.

COUNT
You are a strange being … a sort of a problem almost —
(*Pause*)

ACTRESS
Miss Birken, I suppose, is much less of a problem.

COUNT
That little lady isn't a problem at all, although … I really know her only very slightly.

ACTRESS
Oh!

COUNT
That's the actual truth. But you are a problem. I've always had a yearning for a problem. It's really been a deep personal loss to me, that until yesterday… I *never* saw you act.

ACTRESS
Really?

COUNT
Yes! You see, going to the theater is so complicated. I am used to dining late … then when I get there, the best part of the play is over. Isn't that true?

ACTRESS
From now on, I suppose, you will dine earlier.

COUNT
I've thought of that too. Or maybe I won't dine at all. Dining isn't a special pleasure anyhow.

ACTRESS
Are there any pleasures left to an old man like you?

COUNT
That's a question I often ask myself. But I am not an old man. There must be some other reason.

ACTRESS
Do you think so?

COUNT
Yes. Bobby, for instance, says, that I am a philosopher. You know he means that I do too much thinking.

ACTRESS
Yes … thinking is a misfortune.

COUNT

I have too much time, that's why I reflect. You see, I've often thought if they would transfer me to Vienna, things would be better. There's diversion here, stimulation. But at the bottom, it's not really very different from up there.

ACTRESS
What do you mean by "up there"?

COUNT
Well, down there, you know, in Hungary, in the God forsaken country towns, where I've been stationed most of the time.

ACTRESS
And what did you do in Hungary?

COUNT
Well, as I am telling you, military service.

ACTRESS
Yes, but why did you stay in Hungary so long?

COUNT

Oh, things happen that way.

ACTRESS
But it must be enough to drive one mad.

COUNT
But why? You have a lot more work there, than here. You know, drilling recruits, breaking in mounts … and the country really isn't as bad as they say. They are really quite beautiful, the lowlands — and marvelous sunsets. Too bad I'm not a painter, I've often thought if I were, I would paint them. We had a young chap, Splany, in our regiment, who could do it. — But, dear me, what dull stories I am telling you.

ACTRESS
Please go on; they are delightful!

COUNT
Do you know, the nice thing about you is the way one can chat with you, Bobby told me all about it. And it's so seldom one can find any one like that.

ACTRESS
Down there in Hungary, I suppose.

COUNT
But it's quite the same in Vienna! People are always the same. Where there are more of them, the crowd is larger. That's the whole difference. Tell me, do you really like people?

ACTRESS
Like them —? I hate them! I hate to look at them. I never see any one. I'm always alone. Nobody enters my house.

COUNT
You see, I sort of thought that you hated people. It must often be the case with artists. If one lives in the higher regions… Well, you are lucky, you know at least why you live!

ACTRESS
Who told you that? I haven't the slightest notion what I'm living for!

COUNT
But really — to be famous — to be fêted —

ACTRESS
Does that mean happiness?

COUNT
Happiness? There really is no such thing as happiness. All the things that people talk about most, don't exist … for instance, love. That's one of them.

ACTRESS

I suppose you are right.

COUNT
Enjoyment … intoxication … very good, nobody can deny them … they are something real. Now, when I am enjoying myself … very good, I am aware that I am enjoying myself. Or I am intoxicated, good. That also is something real. And when it's over, well then it's over.

ACTRESS
(*Grandly*) It is over.

COUNT
But as soon as one does not, how shall I express it, as soon as one does not give oneself up to the moment, I mean, if one thinks of the future or the past … well, everything is over in a moment… Afterwards … there is sadness … before … there is uncertainty … in a word, one only becomes confused. Isn't that so?

ACTRESS
(*Nods with wide open eyes*) It seems, you have grasped the essence of things.

COUNT
And, you see, when you have once clearly grasped this, it really doesn't matter whether you live in Vienna or in the Puszta or in Steinamanger. You see, for instance … where may I put my cap? Yes, thank you … what were we talking about?

ACTRESS
About the Puszta.

COUNT
Of course. Well, as I said, there isn't much difference, whether I spend the evening in the officers' mess or at the club. It's all the same.

ACTRESS
And what about love?

COUNT
If you believe in it, some one will always be there who will love you.

ACTRESS
Like Miss Birken, for example.

COUNT

I really don't see why you always have to come back to that little lady.

ACTRESS
But she's your mistress, isn't she?

COUNT

Who says so?

ACTRESS
Everybody knows it.

COUNT
Except myself, strange to say.

ACTRESS
But you fought a duel on her account!

COUNT
Maybe. I was even killed without my knowing it.

ACTRESS
You are a gentleman, won't you sit closer to me?

COUNT
With pleasure.

ACTRESS
Here. (*She draws him to her, and passes her hand through his hair*) I knew you would come to-day.

COUNT
How did you know?

ACTRESS

I knew it last night in the theater.

COUNT
You saw me from the stage, then?

ACTRESS
But man alive! Didn't you notice that I acted for you alone?

COUNT
No, really?

ACTRESS

I was as on wings, when I saw you sitting in the first row.

COUNT
As on wings? On my account? I hadn't the slightest suspicion that you noticed me!

ACTRESS
Your aristocratic reserve is enough to drive one to despair.

COUNT
But…

ACTRESS
“But”!… At least, take your saber off!

COUNT
If you permit.
(*Takes it off, and leans it against the bed*)

ACTRESS
And now give me a kiss.

COUNT
(*Kisses her, she clings to him*)

ACTRESS
It would have been better if I had never seen you.

COUNT
But this seems better to me.

ACTRESS
Count, you are a poseur!

COUNT
I — why?

ACTRESS
Can’t you imagine how happy many a man would be if he were in your place!

COUNT
I’m perfectly happy.

ACTRESS
Well, I thought happiness didn’t exist. Why do you look at me that way? I believe you are afraid of me, Count!

COUNT

I told you, Mademoiselle, you are a problem.

ACTRESS
Oh, don’t bother me with your philosophy … come to me. And ask me for anything at all … you can have whatever you want. You are so handsome.

COUNT
Well then, may I ask (*kissing her hand*) that I may call again this evening?

ACTRESS
This evening … but I have to act then.

COUNT
After the play.

ACTRESS
And you ask for nothing else?

COUNT

I shall ask for everything else after the play.

ACTRESS
(*Hurt*) You can beg a long while then, you abominable poseur.

COUNT
But, see, we've been perfectly frank with each other so far … it seems to me it would be so much more beautiful after the play … much cozier than now, when … I have a sort of feeling the door might open any moment…

ACTRESS
It does not open from the outside.

COUNT
Well, you see, I have an idea one shouldn't lightly spoil in advance something which may be very beautiful.

ACTRESS
Possibly!…

COUNT
To tell the truth, love in the morning seems rather horrible to me.

ACTRESS
Well — you are about the worst case of lunacy I have ever met!

COUNT

I am not talking about women in general … because in general it doesn't make any difference anyway. But women like you … no, you may call me a fool a hundred times over. But women like you … one doesn't take them before breakfast. And so … you know … so…

ACTRESS
Oh, but you are a darling!

COUNT
You understand, what I have said, don't you? I sort of imagine it like…

ACTRESS
How do you imagine it?

COUNT
Like this… I wait for you in a carriage after the play, then we drive somewhere for supper —

ACTRESS

I am not Miss Birken.

COUNT

I didn't mean to say you were. Only, it seems to me, you have to be in the right sort of mood for everything. In my case the mood doesn't come until supper. The most beautiful thing of all is when we drive home together, and then…

ACTRESS
And then?

COUNT
And then … well, that depends upon circumstances.

ACTRESS
Do sit closer. Closer.

COUNT
(*Sitting down on the bed*) Seems to me, that out of the pillows comes a fragrance … mignonette — isn't it?

ACTRESS
It's very warm in here, don't you think so?

COUNT
(*Bends down, and kisses her neck*)

ACTRESS
Oh, Count, that is contrary to your program.

COUNT
Who said anything about "program." I never have any program.

ACTRESS
(*Drawing him close to her*)

COUNT
It really is very warm.

ACTRESS
Do you think so? And so dark, just as if it were evening… (*Draws him toward her*) It is evening … it is

night… Close your eyes, if there is too much light for you. Come!… Come!…

COUNT
(*Offers no further resistance*)

ACTRESS
And what about atmosphere now, you poseur?

COUNT
You are a little devil.

ACTRESS
What a thing to say!

COUNT
Well, then an angel.

ACTRESS
You should have been an actor! Really! You understand women! And do you know, what I shall do now?

COUNT
Well?

ACTRESS

I shall tell you that I shall never see you again.

COUNT
But why?

ACTRESS
Never, never. You are too dangerous! You would drive a woman mad. Here you are standing before me, as though nothing had happened.

COUNT
But…

ACTRESS
Please remember, Count, I have just given you everything.

COUNT

I shall never forget it!

ACTRESS
And what about to-night?

COUNT

What do you mean?

ACTRESS
Well — you wanted to wait for me after the theater?

COUNT
Oh, yes, let’s say, the day after to-morrow.

ACTRESS
What do you mean by “the day after to-morrow”? We were talking about to-day.

COUNT
There wouldn’t be much sense in that.

ACTRESS
Old man!

COUNT
You don’t quite understand me. What I mean has rather to do, how shall I express myself, rather concerns the soul.

ACTRESS
What concern of mine is your soul?

COUNT
Believe me, it has much to do with it. It seems all wrong to me, this notion, that you can separate the two.

ACTRESS
Don’t bother me with your philosophy. If I want any of that, I can read books.

COUNT
One never learns from books.

ACTRESS
Very true! And that’s why you ought to wait for me to-night. As to the soul, we will come to some sort of an understanding, you villain!

COUNT
Well, then, if I may, I shall wait in my carriage…

ACTRESS
You shall wait for me here in my home —

COUNT
… After the play.

ACTRESS
Of course.

(*He buckles on his sword*)

ACTRESS
What are you doing?

COUNT
It seems to me it is time for me to go. For a formal call I have stayed a bit too long as it is.

ACTRESS
Well, this evening it shall be a formal call.

COUNT
Do you think so?

ACTRESS
I'll take care of that. And now give me a last kiss, you darling little philosopher. Here, you seducer, you … sweet child, you seller of souls, you … panther. (*After she has ardently kissed him several times, she thrusts him violently away*) Count, you have done me a great honor.

COUNT
Not at all, mademoiselle! (*At the door*) Au revoir.

ACTRESS
Good-by, and love to Steinamanger.

THE COUNT AND THE GIRL OF THE STREETS



IT IS MORNING toward six o'clock. A poorly furnished room with one window. The dirty yellowish blinds are down. Tattered, greenish curtains. On the dresser are several photographs, and beside them a cheap woman's hat of conspicuously bad taste. Behind the mirror are cheap Japanese fans. On the table over which is drawn a reddish cover is an oil-lamp. It is burning low with a disagreeable odor, and has a shade of yellow paper. Beside it is a pitcher with remains of beer, and a half-empty glass. — On the floor beside the bed a woman's clothes are lying in disorder. They look as though they had just been quickly thrown off. The GIRL *lies sleeping in the bed, breathing quietly. The* COUNT *is lying on the sofa fully dressed with his light overcoat on. His hat lies on the floor at the head of the sofa.*

COUNT

(*Stirs, rubs his eyes, sits up suddenly, remains seated, and looks around*) Where am I?… Oh, yes … I actually went home with the woman, it seems… (*He rises quickly, notices her bed*) Oh, there she is… Queer, what sort of things can happen, even at my age. I haven't the faintest notion, did they carry me up here? No… I remember — coming into the room… I was still awake then, or waked up … or … or maybe it's only the room that reminds of something?… 'Pon my soul, yes, of course … it was yesterday I saw it… (*Looks at his watch*) What! yesterday, a couple of hours ago! — But, I knew, that something had to happen… I felt it in my bones … when I began to drink yesterday, I felt that … and what has happened?… Nothing… Or did there…? 'Pon my soul … for … for ten years it hasn't happened to me that I don't know… Well, let's be honest at any rate, I was drunk… If I only knew since when… I remember perfectly when Bobby and I went into the all-night café, and … no, no… We left together … and then on the way… Yes, that's it, Bobby and I rode in my carriage… But, why do I worry my brains about it? It doesn't really matter. Let's see that we get out of here. (*Rises. The lamp shakes*) Oh! (*Looks at the sleeping* GIRL) Well, she sleeps the sleep of the just. I don't remember anything — but I'll put the money on the table … and then, good-by… (*He stands in front of her, and looks at her for a considerable time*) If I didn't know what she is! (*Studies her*) I've known many who didn't look as virtuous even in their sleep. 'Pon my soul… Bobby would say again, I'm philosophizing, but the truth is, sleep makes all equal, so it seems to me — like its brother, death… Hm, I should like to know, whether… No, I'd remember that… No, no, I dropped like a log on the sofa right away … and nothing happened… It is unbelievable how much alike all women sometimes look… Well, let's go (*He is about to go*) Oh, of course.

(*He takes his wallet, and is about to take out a banknote*)

GIRL

(*Awakening*) Well … who's there so early in the morning —? (*Recognizing him*) Good morning, sonny!

COUNT

Good morning. Have a good sleep?

GIRL

(*Stretching*) Oh, come here. Give me a little kiss.

COUNT
(*Bends down to her, considers, and draws back*) I was just going…

GIRL
Going?

COUNT
It's really about time.

GIRL
You want to go away?

COUNT
(*Half-embarrassed*) Well…

GIRL
Well, good-by, you'll come some other time.

COUNT
Yes, good-by. But, won't you give me your hand?

GIRL
(*Reaches out her hand from under the cover*)

COUNT
(*Takes her hand, and kisses it mechanically, and becoming aware of it, he smiles*) Just as with a princess. Besides, if one only…

GIRL
Why do you look at me that way?

COUNT
If one only sees the head, as now … anyway, each and every one looks innocent when she first awakes … 'pon my soul, one might imagine almost anything, if the kerosene didn't smell so…

GIRL
Yes, the lamps are always a nuisance.

COUNT
How old are you really?

GIRL
Well, what would you guess?

COUNT
Twenty-four.

GIRL

Oh, of course!

COUNT
Older?

GIRL
I'm not yet twenty.

COUNT
And how long have you been…

GIRL

A year.

COUNT
You began early.

GIRL
Better too early, than too late.

COUNT
(*Sits down upon her bed*) Tell me, are you really happy?

GIRL
Am I, what?

COUNT

I mean, are things going well with you?

GIRL
Oh, things always go well with me.

COUNT
Yes… Well, did it never occur to you that you might become something else?

GIRL
What might I become?

COUNT
Well… You are a very pretty girl. You might take a lover, for example.

GIRL
Do you imagine I haven't any?

COUNT
Yes, I know that — But I mean just one single one, who would take care of you, so that you wouldn't have to

go with everybody.

GIRL

I don’t go with everybody. Thank heaven, I don’t have to. I pick those I want.

COUNT
(*Looks around the room*)

GIRL
(*Noticing it*) We move downtown next month, to the Spiegelgasse.

COUNT
We? Who?

GIRL
Well, the Madam, and the couple of other girls who live here.

COUNT
There are others —

GIRL
Next door … don’t you hear?… that is Milly. She was in the café too.

COUNT

I hear some one snoring.

GIRL
That’s Milly. She will snore the whole day long until ten o’clock to-night. Then she gets up, and goes to the café.

COUNT
What an awful life!

GIRL
Of course it is. It annoys the Madam a lot. I’m always on the streets by noon.

COUNT
What do you do on the streets at noon?

GIRL
What do you suppose I do? I’m going on my beat then.

COUNT
Oh, yes … of course… (*Rises, takes out his wallet, and puts a banknote on the table*) Good-by!

GIRL

Going already… Good-by… Call again soon.
(*Turns on her side*)

COUNT
(*Stands still*) Tell me, is everything a matter of indifference to you already?

GIRL
What?

COUNT

I mean, don't you get pleasure out of anything any more?

GIRL
(*Yawning*) I want to sleep.

COUNT
It's all the same to you whether he is young or old or whether he…

GIRL
Why do you ask?

COUNT
… Well (*Suddenly hitting upon a thought*) 'pon my soul, now I know of whom you remind me, it's…

GIRL
Do I look like some one?

COUNT
Unbelievable, unbelievable. Now please, don't talk, at least not for a minute… (*Looking at her*) The very same features. (*He kisses her suddenly on the eyes*), the very image.

GIRL
Well…

COUNT
'Pon my soul, it's too bad that you … aren't something different… You could make your fortune!

GIRL
You talk just like Frank.

COUNT
Who is Frank?

GIRL
The waiter in our café.

COUNT

In what way am I just like Frank?

GIRL
He is also always telling me I might make my fortune, and wanting me to marry him.

COUNT
Why don't you?

GIRL
No thank you… I don't want to marry, no, not for any price… Later on, perhaps.

COUNT
The eyes … the very same eyes… Bobby would surely call me a fool. — But I must kiss your eyes once more … so … and now God bless you, now I must go.

GIRL
Good-by…

COUNT
(*At the door*) Tell me … aren't you a bit surprised?…

GIRL
At what?

COUNT
That I don't want anything of you.

GIRL
There are many men who aren't in the mood in the morning.

COUNT
Of course… (*To himself*) Absurd, that I expect to be surprised… Well, good-by… (*He is near the door*) But really, I'm disappointed. I ought to know that women like her care only about money … what am I saying … it is beautiful, that at least she doesn't pretend; should make one glad… (*Aloud*) Do you know, I shall come to see you again soon?

GIRL
(*With closed eyes*) All right.

COUNT
When are you at home?

GIRL
I'm always at home. You only have to ask for Leocadia.

COUNT
Leocadia… All right — Well, God bless you. (*At the door*) The wine is still in my head. But after all it is

sublime… I am with a woman like her and haven't done anything but kiss her eyes, because she reminded me of some one… (*Turns toward her*) Tell me, Leocadia, does it often happen that any one leaves you in this way?

GIRL
What way?

COUNT
As I do.

GIRL
In the morning?

COUNT
No … have you ever had any one with you, — who didn't want anything of you?

GIRL
No, that has never happened to me.

COUNT
Well, what do you think then? Do you think I didn't like you?

GIRL
Why shouldn't you like me? You liked me well enough by night.

COUNT

I like you now, too.

GIRL
But you liked me better last night.

COUNT
What makes you think that?

GIRL
Why ask such foolish questions?

COUNT
Last night … well, tell me, didn't I drop right down on the sofa?

GIRL
Certainly … with me.

COUNT
With you?

GIRL

Yes, don't you remember?

COUNT

I did … both of us…

GIRL
But you fell asleep right away.

COUNT
Right away… So … that's what happened?…

GIRL
Yes, sonny. But you must have been terribly drunk, that you don't remember.

COUNT
So… And yet … there is a faint resemblance… Good-by… (*Listens*) … What is the matter?

GIRL
The servant is up. Give her a tip as you go out. The outside door is open, so you won't have to give anything to the janitor.

COUNT
(*In the anteroom*) Well… It would have been beautiful, if I had kissed her only on the eyes. It would have been almost an adventure… But it wasn't my destiny. (*The servant opens the door*) Ah — here… Good-night. —

SERVANT
Good morning!

COUNT
Of course … good morning … good morning.

The Mate (1898)

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

Translated by Horace B. Samuel, 1913

Original German Title: 'Die Gefährtin'

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CHARACTERS
THE MATE

CHARACTERS



PROFESSOR ROBERT PILGRAM.

DOCTOR ALFRED HAUSMANN.

PROFESSOR WERKMANN.

PROFESSOR BRAND.

OLGA MERHOLM.

A SERVANT.

The Scene takes place in a summer resort not far from Vienna.

Time: *an Autumn Evening*,

THE MATE



An artistic room. Wall-paper and furniture in light tones, mostly blue. A lady's escritoire on the Left in front; piano on the Right. On the Right a door, on the Left a door. In the background a large open door which leads on to the balcony.

A view onto the landscape; a street with a gradual incline extending a long distance, eventually shut off from view by a churchyard wall. The wall is not high; gravestones and crosses can be seen. Far army in the distance mountains in a haze, not very high. It is late in the evening, nearly night, the country is plunged in darkness, pale moonlight in the lonely streets.

ROBERT *comes out of the room on the Right, leading in two gentlemen,* PROFESSOR WERKMANN *and* PROFESSOR BRAND.

ROBERT. I'm afraid it's very dark here, gentlemen:
I'll fetch a light.

WERKMANN. Thank you, my good friend, we can manage to find our way quite well.

ROB. Just one minute. *(Exit.)*

WERKMANN *and* BRAND *stand alone in the darkness.*

WERK. He is very self-possessed.

BRAND. It's all pose.

WERK. When a man is burying his wife, he doesn't go in for any poses. You take it from me; I've been through it all. What would be the point of it?

BRAND; YOU don't know what Pilgram is like.
It's tremendously effective, don't you see, to bury one's wife in the afternoon and then go and debate scientific subjects for two hours on end in the evening. You see — you were taken in by it as well.

WERK. All the same, one must be a thorough man —

BRAND. *Or a thorough-Enter* ROBERT *with a candlestick, in which two candles are burning,*

ROB. Here I am, gentlemen. *(The room is only half illuminated,)*

WERK. Where are we, then?

ROB. It was my poor wife's room. Those little steps lead straight to the garden gate, and in five minutes you will be at the station.

BRAND. We shall be in time, then, for the nine o'clock train?

ROB. Of course.

The door on the Right opens, the servant enters. He has a wreath in his hand,

ROB. What is it?

SERVANT. Some one from the town has just been here and left this wreath.

ROB. Just now?

WERK. Probably one of your friends who learnt the news too late. You'll see, you'll get some more of these melancholy offerings to-morrow. Yes, yes — I know all about it, unfortunately.

ROB. *(has read the inscription on the ribbon).*
From my assistant; *(explaining)* he's still on the north coast.

BRAND. So Dr. Hausmann is on the north coast!

SERV. Where shall I put the wreath, sir?

WERK. The flowers have a shockingly strong scent.

BRAND. Of course they have. They are tuberoses.

ROB. Yes, and lilacs. *(To the servant)* On the balcony.

The SERVANT *does as he is ordered, then exit.*

WERK. Your assistant is still on his holiday?

ROB. He'll be back soon, anyway. Probably by to-morrow.

WERK. I suppose you will let him take your place at the beginning of the term.

ROB. Not a bit of it! I have not the slightest intention of making a break in my work.

WERK, *(shaking his hand).* Quite right, my dear friend; work is the only consolation.

ROB. There's this point as well. Even supposing it wasn't a consolation, it is very questionable if we should be justified in throwing a portion of our short existence clean away. Once we have had the calamity to survive most of what —

Exit with them, letting them go first.

WERK *(to BRAND).* He never loved his wife.

BRAND. Well, never mind.

All exeunt on the Right; stage empty for a few minutes. OLGA *enters on the Left; she is in a dark evening dress without a hat, with a light fur wrap thrown over her.* SERVANT *comes in from the balcony.*

SERV. Good evening, madam.

OLGA. I suppose the Professor is in the garden?

SERV. The Professor has two gentlemen —

OLGA *makes a sign to the* SERVANT, *as*

ROBERT *comes in on the Left without noticing her.*

ROB. *(going to the escritoire).* I say, Franz, do you know the exact time the last train from town gets here?

SERV. At ten o'clock, sir.

ROB. I see. *(Pause.)* It's possible that Dr. Hausmann will get here to-night. In that case I want you to show him in immediately.

SERV. Here?

ROB. Yes, here, if I happen to be in this room.
Exit SERVANT, *and* ROBERT *sits down at the escritoire and begins to open it.*

OLGA *(going behind him.)* Good evening.

ROB. *(coldly).* Olga! *(He stands up.)*

OLGA *(in an embarrassment, which she strains every nerve to master, succeeding for isolated moments).* I've never had a chance the whole day of pressing your hand.

ROB. Quite true! We've scarcely exchanged a single word. I thank you. *(Holds out his hand.)*

OLGA. You have many friends — to-day proved it.

ROB. Yes, the last two have only just gone.

OLGA. Who was here so late, then?

ROB. Brand, and that snivelling windbag Werkmann. He's fatuously proud of the fact that he lost his own wife last year. That's the real truth. He talks about these matters like an expert, the disgusting fellow — *(Pause.)* But to think of your leaving your villa so late!

OLGA. Do you think I am frightened of taking the path across the fields alone?

ROB. No; but your husband will be uneasy.

OLGA. Oh, no! He quite believes that I am already asleep in my room. Besides, I very often go for a walk in the garden late in the evening — you ought to know that.

ROB. In our avenue, you mean?

OLGA. Our —? You mean the one along the trellis?

ROB. Yes; I always think of it as only for you and me.

OLGA. I often wander about in it, all alone.

ROB. But not at night?

OLGA. In the evenings. It is most beautiful then.

ROB. Your garden has something very peaceful about it.

OLGA. Yes, hasn't it? *(sincerely).* Anyway, you must soon come and see us. You'll feel much better with us — than you do here.

ROB. That's quite possible. *(He looks at her, and then turns towards the back.)* You see, that leads outside, *(OLGA nods).*

ROB. It's hard to believe that it happened only a few hours ago. Can you bring yourself to realise that this same dark path was once bathed in sunlight?
(Pause.) When I close my eyes — I suddenly see the sun again. Strange! I even hear the rumble of the carriages. *(Pause. He is very nervous and distrait in his manner.)* You are quite right, there were an awful lot of people there. When one thinks that everybody came from town — it's really quite a journey. Have you seen the wreath from my pupils?

OLGA. Of course!

ROB. Magnificent, isn't it? And all that sympathy!
Some of my colleagues have even broken up their holiday in order to come; it is really extraordinarily — what's the word— "considerate," isn't it?

OLGA. It's perfectly natural.

ROB. I daresay it is; but I ask myself if all my grief really deserves this sympathy or this expression of sympathy.

OLGA *(almost shocked).* How can you say that?

ROB. Because I myself feel so little. I only know that she is dead — but I realise this with such awful clearness that it tortures me — everything is as cold and clear as the air on a winter day.

OLGA. It won't remain so. The pain will come, and that will be much better.

ROB. Who knows if it will come — it is too long ago.

OLGA *(frigidly)*. Too long ago! — what is too long ago?

ROB. Since she — lived for me — since we lived for each other.

OLGA. Yes, that's usually the case in most marriages. *(She goes to the balcony and looks at the wreath.)*

ROB. It arrived late this evening — from Doctor
Hausmann.

OLGA. Oh! *(She looks at the inscription on the ribbon, ROBERT looks at OLGA; she notices it.)* He isn't here yet?

ROB. No! But I telegraphed to him at once at
Scheveningen, and I regard it as quite on the cards that he'll still arrive to-night. If, when he gets to
Vienna, he drives across from one station to the other —

OLGA. He'll be sure to do that.

ROB. In that case he will be here in an hour.

OLGA *(with forced confidence).* What a great shock it must have been to him.

ROB. No doubt. *(Pause; quietly).* Be frank with me, Olga. There must be some reason at the bottom of your coming here again; I can see it in your manner. Just tell me quite simply what it is.

OLGA. It is harder than I thought,

BOB. *(impatiently, but with great mastery over himself).* Well, then?

OLGA. I came to ask a favour of you.

ROB. If I can do it.

OLGA. Quite easily. It's about some letters which
I wrote to poor Eveline, and which I should like to have back.

BOB. Why in such a hurry?

OLGA. I thought that when everything was all over, the first thing that you would do, would of course be —

BOB. What?

OLGA *(pointing to the escritoire).* What you were on the point of doing when I came in. *(In a mollifying tone)* I would do the same thing if anyone whom I loved had died.

ROB. *(with nervous excitement).* "Loved"— "loved."

OLGA. Well, say who was very dear to me — it's just a way of recalling a person. *(She speaks the following lines like a passage she has learnt by heart.)*
But it might have chanced that just my letters would fall into your hands first — it was to prevent that that I came here to-night. Those letters contain things which you must not read under any circumstances — things which were only intended for another woman — especially certain letters which I wrote two or three years ago.

BOB. Where are they, then? Perhaps you know where they can be found.

OLGA. I'll find them at once, if you will allow me —

ROB. Are you going to —?

OLGA. I think that's the simplest way, as I know where they are. But you can open the drawer and
I will tell you exactly —

ROB. It is not necessary: here is the key.

OLGA. Thank you. But you mustn't think me in any way disingenuous over all this.

ROB. Why? Why should I?

OLGA. Sometime I'll tell you the whole thing — I mean what up to the present only Eveline knew — even at the risk of your losing your regard for me.
But you must not learn it by accident — like this.

ROB. I shall never lose my regard for you.

OLGA. Who knows? You always thought too highly of me.

ROB. I don't think, anyway, that I could learn anything new about you from those letters. I'm sure it's not your own secrets you want to preserve.

OLGA *(shrewdly).* Whose should they be, then?

ROB. Somebody else's secrets, I should think.

OLGA. What are you thinking about? Eveline had no secrets from you.

ROB. I ask no questions — take your letters.

OLGA *(unlocks the escritoire, looks in the drawer).*
Here they are. Yes. *(She takes out a little packet tied together with a blue ribbon, holding it in such a way that ROBERT cannot see it, and finally conceals it, but not too palpably, under her wrap.)* Thank you very much.
Now I must go. Good-bye. *(She gets up to go.)*

ROB. Wouldn't it be advisable to look in the other drawer as well? Only a single note need be left behind — and all your precautions are useless.

OLGA *(less confidently).* What do you mean? —
"useless"?

HOB. You could have spared yourself the trouble,
Olga.

OLGA. What do you mean? I don't understand you at all.

ROB. You say that of all people, you who knew perfectly well the relations existing between Eveline and myself?

OLGA. After one has been married ten years —
But that hasn't got anything to do with my letters.

ROB. And you think that even ten years ago I was under any illusion? That would be extremely foolish on the part of a man who married a wife twenty years younger than himself. I knew perfectly well that I had one or two beautiful years at the outside to look forward to. Yes! I was perfectly clear on the point. One can't talk about being under an illusion. But after all, how many years have we got? Life is not long enough for a man to be able straight away to give up a year of happiness. Besides, a year is enough — at any rate, for the happiness one gets out of women. I mean, of course, women with whom one is in love. One has soon finished with them. There are a lot of other things in life which are much more important.

OLGA. That's possible — but one doesn't always realise it.

ROB. I always realised it. She never really filled my life, not even in that year of happiness. In a certain sense she more than filled it — her atmosphere, if you know what I mean. But even her atmosphere must needs of course be dissipated. All these things are really quite obvious. *(He speaks with increasing emotion, but still externally calm.)* We had nothing more in common than the memory of a short-lived happiness, and I can tell you that that kind of common memories separates people rather than unites them.

OLGA. I can conceive of it turning out quite differently.

ROB. So can I. But not with a creature like
Eveline. She was made to be a mistress, not a mate.
You know that as well as I do.

OLGA. Mate! That's a very big word. How many women are really fitted to be that?

ROB. I never asked it of her. As a matter of fact, I never felt lonely. A man who has a calling *(I don't mean an occupation — a calling, I say)* can never feel lonely, whatever happens.

OLGA *(unenthusiastically)*. That's the splendid thing about men — I mean men like you.

ROB. And when our happiness came to an end, I returned to my own life, which, as you know, she didn't understand much about, and went my own way — as she did hers.

OLGA. No, that wasn't the case. No! no!

ROB. Oh yes, it was! She told you more than you will tell me. So far as I'm concerned, it's quite unnecessary to take any letters away. There are no surprises, and no discoveries left for me. What do you really want? You are positively pathetic. You want to leave me an illusion — no, to envelop me in one, of which I have never been the victim. I know that I lost her long ago — long ago. *(With increasing excitement)* Or do you think I imagine for a single minute that when Eveline and I ceased to belong to each other, she proceeded to cut short her whole life? that she suddenly became an old woman because she had left me — or I her? I never believed that.

OLGA. But, Robert, I can't make out why you should get such notions into your head.

ROB. I know whose the letters are; they are not yours. I know that there is somebody in the world who is far more deeply to be pitied than I am — somebody who loved her. It is he who has lost her, not I — not I. You see that, so far as I am concerned, all this is unnecessary. It can only be that one who —

OLGA. You have made an awful mistake.

ROB. Please leave the subject, Olga. Otherwise
I may end by reading those letters. *(Noticing a movement of Olga's)* I won't do it, Olga. We will burn them before he comes.

OLGA. You will do that?

ROB. Yes! I intended to do so before you came.
I should have thrown all the contents of this escritoire into the fire without looking at them.

OLGA. Yes, I am sure you would not have done that.

ROB. You need not reproach yourself in any way.
Perhaps it's a good thing that I know everything now, without having to look at the letters. At any rate, it makes things clear, and that's the one boon that we ought to ask of life.

OLGA *(seriously)*. You might have asked a great deal more.

ROB. I did, long ago, and then I did not ask in vain; but now — She was young, and I was old. That's the whole story: we'd understand it right enough in the case of other people — why not in this one?

At that moment a locomotive whistles in the distance. OLGA *gives a start. Pause.*

OLGA. As a favour to me, don't see him till to-morrow.

ROB. Do you think that I'm not calm? Do you really think that I? There's only one thing I've got to be careful about. He must never learn that I know — if he did, he would only suspect forgiveness and generosity in every word I spoke. No! I don't want that. That's not the case at all. I never hated him — I don't hate him; there's not the slightest reason why I should hate him, or the slightest reason why I should forgive him. I understand the whole thing far too well. She belonged to him — we mustn't forget the real point. Don't let us once more get so confused by the force of the conventional position as to forget that. It was to him that she belonged, not to me — and it couldn't have gone on much longer.

OLGA. Please, Robert, don't see him to-night.

ROB. You know perfectly well that she wanted to leave me.

OLGA. How should I know that?

ROB. Because she confided in you.

OLGA. Oh no!

ROB. How did you know, then, where these letters were to be found?

OLGA. I found out by chance once when she — read — one of them — when I was there — I didn't mean to hear — but —

ROB. But she had to have a confidante — of course she had. And you couldn't help being hers — that's all perfectly clear to me. No — things couldn't have gone on much longer. Do you think I haven't seen how both of them were ashamed of their lives — how both of them suffered? Why, I have actually longed for the moment to come when they should come to me and say, "Please free us." Why didn't they have the pluck? Why didn't I say to them, "Go, then. I won't keep you"? But we were all too cowardly — they and I. That's the senseless part of the whole thing. We always keep waiting for something to turn up to put an end to an impossible position — something that would have spared us the trouble of being honest with each other; and now and then that something does turn up, as in our case. *(The noise of a carriage; short silence. OLGA very moved. ROBERT deliberately calm, goes on speaking.)* And one must acknowledge that at any rate it was a dignified end. *(The carriage stops.)*

OLGA. You will — see him?

ROB. He must not see the letters.

OLGA. Let me go; I'll take them away.

ROB. This way, down these steps.

OLGA. I hear his step.

ROB. He has come through the garden, then.
(Takes the letters out of her hand and quickly shuts them up again in the drawer.) You stay. It is too late.
(Steps outside).

ALFRED *comes in quickly; he wears a dark travelling-suit. He is slightly embarrassed when he sees* OLGA. ROBERT *goes forward to meet him, but remains standing after a few steps and waits for him to approach.* ALFRED *shakes hands with him, and then goes up to*

OLGA *and shakes hands with her. A short silence.*

ALFRED. We could never have dreamt of anything like this, seeing each other under these circumstances, could we?

ROB. You can't have stopped a minute in town, old man.

ALF. No! I couldn't, and be here to-night — and
I had to. *(To OLGA)* Shocking — shocking! — How did it happen? I know nothing at all. Just a word, I implore you.

ROBERT *doesn't answer.*

OLGA. It happened quite suddenly.

ALF. A heart attack, then?

ROB. Yes.

ALF. Without any previous symptoms?

ROB. Without any previous symptoms.

ALF. And when? where?

ROB. Two days ago in the afternoon, while she was going for her walk in the garden. The gardener saw her fall — just near the pond. I heard him shout from my room — and when I came down it was all over.

ALF. My poor dear fellow! What you must have suffered! One can't realise it — that young and vital —

OLGA. Perhaps it's the most beautiful fate.

ALF. That's poor consolation.

ROB. My telegram must have been delayed, I suppose?

ALF. Yes; otherwise I should have been here much earlier in the day. Yes, if there were such things as presentiments, something would have made me come home much earlier.

OLGA. But there aren't.

ALF. Quite true. It was a day just like any other — if possible, brighter and more cheerful than usual.

ROB. More cheerful than usual.

ALF. Of course — I remember it now. We had gone for a sail, right out into the sea, and then in the cool of the evening we went for a walk on the sands.

ROB. "We"?

ALF. Of course — a whole lot of us. And when I came back to the hotel I stood by my window looking out on to the sea for perhaps a quarter of an hour. I then turned on the light, and there was the telegram lying on the table. Ah! — (*Pause — he holds his hand in front of his eyes*. OLGA *looks at*

ROBERT, *who is looking straight in front of him.*

ALFRED *takes his hands away from his eyes.)* So this is — *(heavily)* her room!

ROB. Yes.

ALF. How often we used to sit here on the balcony. *(Turning round, he looks out on to the street and sees the churchyard wall. Shudders.)*
Over there?

ROBERT *nods*.

ALF. We will go there together to-morrow.

ROB. And you can put your wreath there yourself,
Alfred. It has just arrived.
Pause.

ALF. What are you going to do now, Robert?

ROB. What do you mean?

OLGA. I have asked the Professor to spend as much time as he possibly can with us at the villa during the next few months.

ALF. He certainly shouldn't stay here. You shouldn't stay in the place, Robert, where —

ROB. In any case I shall remove to town in the beginning of October. It's not long to wait. Besides, I shall look in at the laboratory once or twice. The two Americans who were here last year have been working since the end of August.

ALF. Yes, you told me that in your last letter.
But you mustn't go to town on that account.
You surely are not going to begin work straight away?

ROB. You really upset my nerves, Alfred. What else am I to do? I assure you that I am in the mood for work and nothing else.

ALF. But you won't be able to now.

ROB. You're saying just what all the others say.
I feel perfectly competent; why, I've even got a real desire for work.

ALF. I quite understand that; but that desire, as a matter of fact, is deceptive. I've got an idea *(sincerely).*
Come away with me. You'll give me a few more days' leave, and I'll take you with me.
What do you say to that, Frau Merholm?

OLGA *(labouredly).* A very good idea.

ROB. You want to go away — you want to go away now, Alfred?

ALF. In any case I was going to ask you for a few more days.

ROB. But where do you want to go to, then?

ALF. I want to go to the seaside again.

ROB. Back?

ALF. Yes, but with you. It will do you good — take it from me. Am I not right, Frau Merholm?

OLGA. Oh yes!

ALF. You'll travel with me to Scheveningen, and there spend a quiet few days with us.

ROB. "Us" — you say "us"?

ALF *(slightly embarrassed)*. Yes.

ROB. What do you mean by "us"? Aren't you alone, then?

ALF. Of course I'm alone; but there are people in Scheveningen, don't you know, whom I see something of. There are some with whom I-ROB. Well?

ALF. I was going to tell you in a few days, anyway; but as this is the psychological moment — to put it shortly — I've got engaged there.

ROB. *(quite coldly).* Oh!

ALF. It makes no odds whether I tell you to-day or to-morrow; the world goes round all the same.
It is rather strange that just now —

ROB. Yes — I congratulate you.

ALF. That's why I said "with us" before; and now you will understand why I want to go back again.

ROB. That's perfectly easy to understand.

ALF. But please come, too. Her parents will be quite delighted to make your acquaintance. I've told them such a lot about you. They are charming people; and as for the girl, well, you'll see for yourself.

ROB. I don't think — I don't think — I — I shall have an opportunity later on. *(He keeps up his pose of calmness with a great strain, but with complete success.)* It's really quite a mad idea of yours that I should go with you now to the north coast to be introduced to your fiancée. How many millions has she got, by-the-bye?

ALF. *(offended).* What a question to ask! I am really not the kind of man to marry for money —

ROB. So it's a *grande passion*, is it?

ALF. Please, Robert, don't let's talk about it any more to-day. It's like — *(He half says, "dese-cration.")*

ROB. Why not? As you have rightly remarked, "The world goes round all the same." Let us confine ourselves to the land of the living. Where did you meet her? —

ALF. She lives in Vienna.

ROB. Oh! Now I know all about it.

ALF. Quite impossible.

ROB. Once you told me, don't you remember, about a fair-haired sweetheart of yours when you were still a student —

ALF. Well, what about it?

ROB. Well, meeting again after a long time — rebirth of the old love.

ALF. So that's what you think, is it? No, it's not she. I have only known my fiancée for the last two years, and I went to the seaside in order to see her.

ROB. So it was there that you fell in love with her.

ALF. Oh, I have known for ages that she was going to be my wife.

ROB. Really!

ALF. We have been secretly engaged for a year.

ROB. And you didn't breathe a word of it to me — to us. Oh!

ALF. There were certain reasons to be taken into account — her family was at first — but we understood each other from the beginning. I am in a position to say that it was a case of love at first sight.

ROB. Starting two years back?

ALF. Yes.

ROB. You were in love with her?

ALF. Yes.

ROB. And — she with you?

ALF. *(almost mechanically).* And she with me.

ROB. And what about the other woman? — the other woman?

ALF. What other woman? —

ROB. *(holding him by the shoulder and pointing over the street with the other hand).* The one over there. *(ALFRED glances at OLGA.)* What did you do with her?

ALF. *(after a pause, leaning on the window).* Why have you been playing with me all this time, Robert, if you knew? Why, if you already knew, did you speak to me like a friend? You had the right to do anything to me that you wanted, but not to play with me.

ROB. It was not a case of playing. I would have raised you from the ground if you had been broken by grief. I would have gone with you to her grave — if the woman who is lying over there had been your love; but you have turned her into your wanton, and you have filled this house with lies and foulness right up to the roof till

it makes me sick — and that's why — that's why, yes, that's why I'm going to kick you out.

ALF. Perhaps I could explain even this.

ROB. Clear out — clear out — clear out!

Exit ALFRED.

ROB. So that's what you wanted to save me from?
Yes, I understand now; lucky for her that she passed away without an idea — of what she really meant to him.

OLGA *(turns towards him).* Without an idea?

ROB. What do you mean?

OLGA *(after reflecting for a short time).* She — knew it.

ROB. What — she actually-OLGA. She knew what she meant to him. Don't you see the whole situation? He neither deceived her nor humiliated her. Why, she had been prepared for his marriage as a matter of course for quite a long time. And when he wrote to her *(points to the escritoire)* she shed as few tears for him — as he did for her. They would never have come to you — to ask you for their freedom; they had all the freedom they wanted.

ROB. She — knew it? But you! — you wanted to hide those letters from me —

OLGA. Am I not giving you your freedom back again? For years and years you suffered at the hands of that woman — rushed from one self-deception into another, which made you love her more, and consequently suffer more. And now you want to torture yourself still further on account of a calamity which you only imagine, and which this particular woman was absolutely incapable of ever suffering, because she found life so easy, in a way that people like you can never understand.

ROB. And to think that I should know for the first time to-day! — for the first time! Why didn't you, who saw the whole thing, shake me out of my weakness? Why couldn't I know a year ago?
Even three days ago —

OLGA. I was afraid to do so — just as you would have been. Yes, as you would have been. You should have known — either not at all — or to-day.

ROB. Does it make any difference, her being dead?

OLGA. No difference at all! But it is clear, as it otherwise would never have been. So long as she was alive, her very existence — her very smile, would have given some semblance of importance to this miserable trumpery adventure — You could not have felt what you feel to-day, now that she is beyond the reach of your anger — and perhaps it will give you peace to think how far, how infinitely far, that woman lived away from you — that woman who just happened to die in your house. *(Exit.)*

ROBERT *is silent for a short time; he then locks the escritoire drawer; then he stands up, goes to the door*

and calls “Franz.”

SERV. Yes, sir.

ROB. I am going away early to-morrow. Get everything ready, and have a cab at the house by seven o’clock.

SERV. Very good, sir.

ROB. *(after short pause).* I’ll give you all further directions to-morrow. Now you can go to bed. *(As the SERV. stays)* I’ll lock this room up myself — it is to remain locked up until I come back.

SERV. Very good, sir.

ROB. Good-night.

SERV. Good-night, sir. *(Exit on the Right.)*

ROBERT *immediately locks the door. He then goes to the balcony; when he is about to close the windows, he notices the wreath. He picks it up, brings it into the room, and places it on the escritoire. He then goes to the door on the Left, with a light in his hand; he remains standing by the door, turns and looks round the room once more.*
He takes a deep breath, and then gives a smile of relief and exit. The noise of his locking up is heard. The dark room remains empty for a time, then the curtain falls.

Paracelsus (1899)

A PLAY IN VERSE IN ONE ACT

Translated by Horace B. Samuel, 1913

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CHARACTERS



CYPRIAN, *AN ARMOURER.*

JUSTINA, *his wife.*

CECILIA, *her sister.*

DOCTOR COPUS, *Town Physician.*

ANSELM, *a Gallant.*

THEOPHRASTUS BOMBASTUS HOHENHEIM, *styled* PARACELSUS.

The Scene takes place in Basel at the beginning of the sixteenth century, on a fine June morning, in the house of CYPRIAN.

PARACELSUS

A ROOM IN CYPRIAN'S *house. The room is well furnished and has two doors, one leading* L. *into JUSTINA'S room, the other R. into the ante-room.*

JUSTINA *sits at the window busy with some work (at a distaff). Enter* CECILIA.

SCENE I



JUSTINA *(LOOKING UP quickly)*. What? back betimes?

CECILIA. Too noisy is the town. *(She sits down.)*
My head so ached, I needs must hie me home.
Had'st thou been with me in the market-place,
Thou had'st returned with me.

JUSTINA. Why so?

CECILIA. Since yonder
Teems such a press and babble of wild tongues
That no one in their wits can suffer it.

JUSTINA. Is there? What's to be seen? Are new jugglers come?

CECILIA. But did the girl not gossip?

JUSTINA. She came not

CECILIA. Nay, of a truth, she comes not home today.
The whole of Basel stands there wonderbound,
For all stream thither and all there remain,
As though the greatest wonder were on view.

JUSTINA. Prithee, what wonder sayst, thou crazy thing?

CECILIA. 'Tis but a mere quacksalver — nothing more.

JUSTINA. That only, sister?

CECILIA. Ay, we have already
Had here enow o' fellows of that kidney.
But what in him they so surpassing find —?

JUSTINA. He must be famous, or has travelled far —
Didst thou not hear his name?

CECILIA. There buzzed and buzzed
So many round me, I forgot it all.
Praise God that I am home — my head is spinning.

SCENE II



JUSTINA, CECILIA. *ENTER* DR. COPUS.

DR. C. I wish you both good morrow, worthy ladies.

JUSTINA. You come betimes *(smiling).* The child is sick again.

DR. C. Then 'tis the first to-day that waiteth me,
For all the others from me run away.

JUSTINA. Where are they?

DR. C. Where are they? Why, in the market!
Sir Paracelsus hath appeared to us:
What need remains of Doctor Copus now?

CECILIA. Why, yes, 'twas Paracelsus.

JUSTIN A. Paracelsus!
So it is he, that high renowned leech!

DR. C. *(angry).* What say you? — high renowned?

CECILIA (*mollifying*). She means it not.

DR. C. And "leech"? Then prithee dub me quacksalver,
And call me all unknown, if Paracelsus
Renownèd is, and leech!

CECILIA *(almost anxiously).* What is he then?

DR. C. A knave,
And now enough! *(Breaks off.)* How are you, gracious Mistress? *(Feels* CECILIA'S *pulse.)*

A little quick.

CECILIA. Have I not got the fever?

DR. C. Did you the powder duly take this morn?

CECILIA. For sure; as you prescribed it, Dr. Copus;
But, marry, my pulse is still too quick.

DR. C. And marry,
Had you perchance forborne to take the powder

‘Twere twice as quick.

CECILIA. Do you prescribe another
For me to-day?

DR. C. Your tongue, an so you please.

CECILIA *puts out her tongue.*

DR. C. Mistress, not bad; your tongue will pass, methinks.

CECILIA. ’Tis many a day since so my head did ache.

DR. C. *(without listening to her, suddenly enraged again).* And know you who stands yonder with the crowd?

JUSTINA. Who is’t? and where?

DR. C. Our Master Cyprian
Stands in the mart and listens to the knave.

JUSTINA. My husband —

DR. C. He who whilom scorned such folk
As homeless tramp in rags about the streets
Stands in the market — nay, stands on the steps
That lead to Paracelsus’ wooden platform,
And hears, and sees, and wonders, and goes mad.

JUSTINA. But tell me, pray, what is so wonderful
About that man?

DR. C. Now I find wonderful
But this — the mighty impudence he shows —
One word, which I did hear with mine own ears:
“My beard hath deeper erudition
Than all the scribes and doctors in the world.”

JUSTINA. A jest — so rings it!

DR. C. Yea, defend him then:
He mocketh Avicennas, scorneth Galen,
Belittles all the men that were before him
And brought our art to this its lofty height;
Jeers at the school from which himself did spring,
Reviles the leeches and apothecaries;
And the good people’s claps and cries to catch,

What think you that the shameless fellow does —
Does with the physick that sick men have brought him?
The draughts he poureth out upon the ground,
Far hurls the bottles from him into space,
And simply blows the powder in the air,
And shouts the while: A new Hippocrates
And more than that am I, I, Paracelsus,
And all your leeches are crabbed simpletons.

JUSTINA. And Cyprian stands there?

DR. C. With ears aprick!
And half of Basel with him stands and gapes.
And mine own very patients I beheld —
That yonder stand and wait upon his counsel.

JUSTINA. Prescribes he?

DR. C. Will you go to him perchance?
Marry! He doth prescribe — and think you not
To-morrow's death-roll giveth ample proof?
But I would fainer say to you: Farewell,

I go unto the Council, and mine office
Resign; and then what crumbs of life remain
Far from ungrateful Basel I'll enjoy.

CECILIA. Sir Doctor! And my head? What shall I do?

DR. C. Marry, I'll show you how the knave contrives.

JUSTINA. Ay, prithee, show us that.

CECILIA. Upon my aches
Will you with that man's arts experiment?

DR. C. What, Madam, have you headache?

CECILIA. Nay, you know it.

DR. C. AS Paracelsus speak I now: take heed,
Now gaze at me. *(He fixes her, makes magnetic gestures with hand.)* The headache's flown away.

CECILIA. I have it still — and stronger than before.

DR. C. So doth he do! And all without a powder —

And rails withal at those who do not likewise.
And there you have his much-belauded art.
And this in Basel! Can a man conceive it?

JUSTINA. I trow, such is his practice everywhere.

DR. C. In truth; yet here but thirteen years ago
He still was sitting at his master's feet,
And was Trithemius' scholar! Knew you not?

JUSTINA. Trithemius? The one who died last year?

DR. C. And in good season! And to this self-same town
After unnumbered world-wide journeyings
Through Sweden, Prussia, and through Tartary,
Moving from one place to another — fleeing —
Mark you my meaning: he had cause to flee —
Returneth to the self-same town that taught him
The rudiments of our exalted art,
Which he hath now forgotten and gainsaid.

JUSTINA. Nay, tell me, then, who it is? Lived he in Basel?

DR. C. You knew him well when he was simply styled
Bombastus Theophrastus Hohenheim.

JUSTINA *(highly excited).* What say you? Theophrastus...

DR. C. Hohenheim.

JUSTINA. 'Tis he?

DR. C. Ay, he.

JUSTINA. Then the great Paracelsus,
Hear'st thou, Cecilia, is Hohenheim,
Of whom I told thee.

CECILIA. Nay, what aileth thee?

JUSTINA. Thou did'st not know him — wert as yet a child;
But now I know why Cyprian gives ear.

SCENE III



ENTER ANSELM (A GALLANT), CECILIA, JUSTINA, COPUS.

ANSELM. My knocks you heard not, so I crave withal
Your pardon, that I entered unannounced.
Do I intrude? Is not the Master here?

JUSTINA. Not yet.

ANSELM *(with amiable affectation*). How fareth the most beautiful
Of dames? and how the loveliest of maidens?
How the most erudite of learned men?

CECILIA. And how the most unbearable of gallants?

ANSELM *(looking all the time at* JUSTINA). He fareth well — for soon he must depart
This fairest city, and much dear to him.

CECILIA. Are you quite sure? You promised it so oft!

ANSELM. My father calls me; I must home again
Before I *(glances at* JUSTINA) reach the goal of my desires;
For now is Master Thomas discontented:
My organ play's amiss; my composition
Is not succeeded; and no single song
Have I completed, who began so much.

CECILIA. The cause is simple.

DR. C. You are yet so young,
And Music is no easy art withal.

ANSELM. To him who is not happy, naught comes easy.

CECILIA. And if a man through all the nights carouse,
And play at dice until the grey o' dawn,
Hell ne'er succeed in anything by day.

JUSTINA (*reproachfully*), Cecilia!

DR. C. Do you so? Nay, 'tis not good.

ANSELM. Have you a remedy 'gainst grief of soul?

DR. C. Dice are no remedy.

ANSELM. Nor even wine.
Yet both oblivion furnish — that is good.

DR. C. Your leech I am not — so must hold my peace.

CECILIA. But pray be mine; for lo! the livelong time
My head aches, and I stand here in distraction.

DR. C. Pardon, good Mistress, I'll prescribe forthwith
What shall assuage your pain within an hour.

CECILIA. Come to my chamber, Doctor.

DR. C. By your leave.
Exeunt COPUS *and* CECILIA.

SCENE IV

JUSTINA, ANSELM.



ANSELM. Justina.

JUSTINA. Stop!

ANSELM. To-day you do enjoin me vainly;
That I the city needs must leave is true;
True from to-day I ne'er shall see you more,
And I must needs declare —

JUSTINA. I will not hear it.

ANSELM. Then I am silent; but my dumbness speaks.

JUSTINA. Each single word of yours is but an insult,
As are your looks offensive to my honour.

ANSELM. Those looks which upwards gaze unto a goddess,
Those words which upwards mount into a prayer —?

JUSTINA. A truce, I say.

ANSELM. You know me not, Justina;
You know not what I wish — scarce what I am.
You deem me but a botcher — or a fool!

I am not that! I'm more than you divine,
And that which palsies all my spirit's strength
Is that you know it not, and do disdain it.
A smile from those your lips could fashion me
An artist — ah! a kiss a very master!

JUSTINA *(has recovered her self-possession, is cold and sharp).* Fetch you from others what shall learn you skill;

I have no kisses and no smiles withal.

ANSELM. Then would I sing most wondrous songs in praise
Of my well-lovèd mistress, that our names
Shall travel linked to far posterity.

JUSTINA. Blossoming youth hath never tempted me:

Shall fame, then — shall a shadow lure me?
But, prithee, see — you only asked a smile...
I'll grant you more —

ANSELM. Oh, speak.

JUSTINA. I'll laugh aloud *(laughs).*

ANSELM. You drive me unto madness.

JUSTINA. Long's the way.

ANSELM. And unto death.

JUSTINA. We must all travel thither.

ANSELM *(throws himself down).* See! At your feet

I beg you, come this even
Into your garden — there for a last time

I fain will press my lips upon your hand.
No one will witness us... I'll climb within
Over the trellis there... the night is secret,
I'll wait within the arbour.

JUSTINA. You are mad!
Arise. My husband comes.

ANSELM. What then? An he
See me upon my knees, he'll laugh withal —
So blithely doth he walk about the world,
So certain of his wife, and drunken so
With the proud joy of his monopoly.
But I declare to you — such arrogance...

JUSTINA. Arise, for Heaven's sake! Do you not hear —?

SCENE V



ANSELM, JUSTINA, CYPRIAN. *Later* PARACELSUS.

CYPRIAN *(smiling at the embarrassment of both).*
My worthy gallant, so you're here again?

ANSELM. I am... I merely wanted...

CYP. (*without noticing him further*, *to* JUSTINA).
My sweet child,

I bring to-day a guest right marvellous,
With whom I warrant you we shall divert us.
(JUSTINA *gives a slight start.)*
My worthy Paracelsus, enter in
(PARACELSUS *appears at the door.)*

A simple burgher's house — and yet methinks,
After your buffets of the midnight air,
It looketh not amiss.

PARACELSUS. I do not scorn
The hospitality of Heaven's roof.

CYP. (*pointing to* ANSELM). Anselm, a gallant noble who in Basel
At organ-playing — organ-playing, hey? —

ANSELM. Ay, truly, I would learn to play the organ.

CYP. (*remembering*). To Master Thomas, verily... his father

I furnished a most lordly suit of armour
When with a troop of horsemen here he passed.
(*Shaking his head)* Warrior the sire... the son is a musician.

ANSELM. Just for a pastime.

CYP. Well. *(To* PARACELSUS) And now, my worthy,
Be welcome to us; 'tis full time that you
Should spend in honourable company
An hour over a bowl of goodly wine.

PARA. Does your fair spouse still recognise myself?

JUSTINA. Surely I know you.

PARACELSUS *looks at her steadfastly*.

CYP. Verily for his years
How weatherworn! Now what sayest thou?
The man o'er whom sweeps mystery and gloom,
The never-resting one, whom rumour wild
Ever foreruns like to a madden'd herald,
This sorcerer — is none but Hohenheim,
Whom as a pious student once we knew.

PARA. I am no sorcerer, my noble dame;
I am a leech, but shrewder than the others.

CYP. What leeches are, my friend, that know we well;
They ply not such buffooneries as you.
Yet whatso'er you are, you do divert me,
And now that you have crossed my house's threshold,
Be you my guest — from whenceso'er you come.
And I'm rejoiced I judged you aye aright,
Why, years ago, what time you dwelt in Basel,
Busied yourself with alchemy at Trithem's,
And under certain windows nightly languished,
I ever knew no good would come o' you!

Maid comes with wine; w*hen she has served it, she goes away again*. JUSTINA *busies herself a little in arranging the table*. PARACELSUS *looks sharply at* ANSELM.

PARA. You deem?

CYP. But this forsooth my censure is:
Let each man live what fashion makes him glad!
What would it boot, forsooth, by one's own hearth
Serving one's household and the common weal,
To ply one's handicraft an honest burgher,
Were there not others lured to far adventures —
Who fare as errant fellows on their way?
And I am fain at times to see such varlets,
Who bring the flavour of their distant journeys.
Then, when they leave, why, one is triply glad
That one has wife and home and handicraft.

JUSTINA. Your guest still stands the while.

CYP. Nay, sit you down,

And you, my worthy gallant.

ANSELM. Pardon me.
I must depart, for this same night I journey.

CYP. What say you?

ANSELM. Yea, my father calls and urges,
And many duties have I e'er I leave.
I'll come at noon, to bid you my adieus.
(As he leaves) I could not bear that look another moment.

SCENE VI

CYPRIAN, JUSTINA, PARACELSUS.



CYP. WHAT AILS the gallant?

JUSTINA *(embarrassed).* I know not.

CYP. *(smiling).* But I!
What boots it that he spake to thee of love?

JUSTINA. But nay.

CYP. That thou wert wrathful with him —:

JUSTINA. Nay.

CYP. And didst despatch him homewards with rough words?

JUSTINA. What a conceit!

CYP. (laughing) I hope thou didst no less.

JUSTINA. Well, then, I did so.

CYP. See how red she grows.

PARA. And bashful as though beauty were a sin.

JUSTINA *(almost in tears).* I do entreat thee...

CYP. *(to* PARACELSUS). See, ever the same.

PARA, *(meaningly).* I see't.

CYP. *(jesting).* Ashamed of her mute — potency
That each man feels perforce who nigh her comes.
Thou too were wont to sing a song thereof.

JUSTINA *(entreating*) I beg thee.

PARA. Do — you fear your memory —?
One cannot better rid you of your fear
Than when one wakes the past to life again.

CYP. Whom fears she here withal? The past is past. "
She took me for her spouse, not you, and praises

Daily her God for that election.
Mine is this house, as it my father's was,
And all my forbears for three hundred years.
Waxes its weal by labour and by toil:
Come now — my friend, look at me, this same arm,
Which, as is known, to forge a goodly sword,
And, if needs be, to swing it too hath skill,
Is aptly fashioned to defend a woman.
'Tis that the woman asks, and by that virtue
I won her, by that virtue I can keep her.
Nothing have I to fear — not memory,
Nor any moonish passion: by the present
Encompassed and well trammelled is the woman.
My door stands open wide — I fear no man.

PARA. I would that word were true as it is proud.

CYP. I grant that wish unto you— 'tis fulfilled.

SCENE VII



JUSTINA, CYPRIAN, PARACELSUS. *Enter* CECILIA. *As she sees* PARACELSUS, *she starts to go.*

CYP. Nay, stay! This is Cecilia.

PARA. Your sister.

JUSTINA. She was a child when you did leave the city.
Cecilia, this is a wonder-doctor.

CECILIA. I've seen you, sir, before.

CYP. How were it, think you,
An you on her made trial of your art?

CECILIA. How... what?

CYP. Just bide a while with us. I wager
This man can heal you by his sorcery.

PARA. What say you?— "sorcery"?

CYP. What other word
Fits that which in the market-place I saw?

JUSTINA. But I myself am fain to know at last
What you can complish.

CYP. Now she finds her speech.
Amazement took it — curiosity
Restores it. (*Condescendingly*) Of all jugglers that have showed here,
He is it who most shrewdly hits the mark.
I have no special favour for such folk;
The art of eating fire or juggling balls,
Goldmaking, quackery, and comedy
Suits not my case. Marry, you all are varlets.

PARA. Maybe; we are not councillors, for certain.

CYP. The jest is bold, yet let it be forgiven,
Since of good humour is my mood to-day,
And you accomplish more than others can.
One sees that you learnt something in the past,
And under all the swindling tricks you ply,

Something there flashes that might learning be.

PARA. *(scornfully).* You jest!

CYP. Hear, children, what he hath accomplished.

PARA. Prithee forbear....

CYP. Just while I think thereof.
(To JUSTINA *and* CECILIA) You know the wife o' the smith.

CECILIA. Who is quite palsied?

CYP. She moves since this same morning arm and legs.
What all the others' labour ne'er could complish,
This man in one brief minute did achieve.

CECILIA. Is't possible?

CYP. And there are stranger things.
Know'st thou the threshing-master's little daughter?

JUSTIN A. Who the past winter was struck sudden dumb?

CYP. Again she speaketh since he bid her speak.

JUSTINA. How is't all possible?

CYP. By wizardry!
And I have asked myself, extreme amazed,
How you till now have 'scaped the death of fire.

PARA. Patience, my honoured master; time brings counsel.

CYP. But that which most of all astounds me
Was that which you did practise on Medardus.
(*Explaining*) He made the lad into a slumber sink
By his eye's potency.

CECILIA. Just by your eyes?

CYP. Then said he unto him — we all could hear it —
You are come homeward from a distant journey,
Through foreign lands, where you have much adventured.
Tell us the tale thereof.

JUSTINA. And he?

CYP. Did tell!

JUSTINA. Of men, of things that he had never seen?

CYP. And of adventures that he never had.

JUSTINA. And he believed therein?

PARA. Not longer than I wished.

I did again those dreams obliterate;
And what he told to us, he knows no more.

CYP. Only yourself can what you gave redeem.

PARA. For sure.

CYP. And haply had you freed him not,
From those dreams which yourself had fashioned him?

PARA. His life long would he swear that it was true.
Stands up; suddenly, *in an almost pathetic tone:*
So much avail I! Who avails so much?
I can be destiny, if so I please.

CYP. Such stuff, good fellow, dupes the market-place.
Here, leave big words alone, an so you please:
Destiny comes from God, not sorcerers,
And what you work is madness — nowise truth.

PARA. More than the truth, which once was and shall be,
Is madness, that which is... and rules the moment.
Did you avail the past years of your life,
Like written pages to unroll before you,
You scarcely would a single word interpret,
For Memory deceiveth like to Hope.
All’s mystery... the minute passed
As each successive one, only the moment
Is ours — and lo! it flees away already.
Ponder but this — how every night compels us
To travel downwards to a foreign bourne,
Empties us of our potency and riches,
And how all life’s abundance and its guerdons
Are of far lesser puissance than the dreams
That do our helpless, unwilled sleep encounter.

CYP. And many a nightmare hath rid o’er my brain;
Yet what avails it? One wakes up afresh,

There comes the sun, the wholesome noise o' day,
One laughs at dreams and goes about one's work.
Only who striveth after nothingness,
Like you, will let a dream bewilder him.
For men like us, who know their own desires,
Fate only is what shows itself by day,
And doth not vanish when we ope our eyes.
Ay, men like you were very lief, forsooth,
To rase the limits 'twixt the night and day,
And place us all in gloaming and in doubt.
May God be thanked much is there that is certain,

A man like me stands aye on solid ground,
Holds safely what he hath, is just and strong,
And be assured we fear your like no whit.

PARA. Nor is your fear required. But you did wish
That I should heal the worthy lady's sickness.

CYP. Quite right.

CEC. I'm well... besides, I have a doctor.

CYP. Then let Justina tell you, she confides
In her more than in me.

JUSTINA. The girl is peevish,
Nigh melancholy.

CEC. Nay.

JUSTINA. At times she sigheth,
Tears also have I seen within her eyes.

PARA. And no one knoweth why?

CEC. I never weep.

PARA. My noble mistress, I'll not question you,
The causes of your trouble will not probe,

I can away with every pain of yours,
Even without your naming me the reason.

CEC. Nay, nay.

CYP. Methinks it were well worth a trial.

PARA. A leech's questions oft are burdensome.
I'll spare you that, and make you hale and well.

CEC. Take all my pain away?

PARA. That will I do.

CEC. And then shall I be free?

PARA. From every pang.

CEC. And shall be blithe?

PARA. And laugh the livelong day,
And understand not how you e'er were troubled.

CEC. Nay, I'll not laugh; nay, I will not be blithe.

CYP. Come, let a body look upon this fool.
Verily, laughter is God's finest blessing.

PARA. An it please not the lady, we will leave her
To find the course of silent happiness.

CEC. I wish not happiness.

CYP. Thou dost not wish —?

JUSTINA. What dost thou wish, then?

CEC. To be left in peace.

PARA. It seems, my child, the pain oppressing you
Is steeped so deeply in a youthful joy
You would not lack it for the world. My counsel
Is, therefore — keep it truly in your heart.

CECILIA *runs army.*

SCENE VIII

JUSTINA, CYPRIAN, PARACELSUS.



CYP. And there you smile no whit discomfited.
It seems the magic wand has gone astray,
And in my house your art fails utterly.

PARA. I rather deemed that it had shown itself.

CYP. Perchance your sorcery in the market too
Was well rehearsed with the quickly healed,
As for Medardus, why, I warrant you,
Some paltry groschen bought his services.

PARA. Maybe.

CYP. A leech you style you; you're a vagrant,
Like others, too, who now and then have luck.

PARA. And so not worth your hospitality.
Farewell.

CYP. Oh, no! You'll not escape so lightly.

JUSTINA. You see, my husband jests — you still are welcome.

CYP. Truly! Each guest according to his kind.
Marry, if such a man one home invites,
Then let him show his mettle. Why, the fiddlers,
What folk I have here in mine house at times,
They play to me — or else they enter not.

PARA. 'Tis true. I have not yet earned me this drink.

He steps suddenly in front of JUSTINA.

JUSTINA. What wish you?...

She tries to lift herself and cannot.

CYP. Well?

JUSTIN A. I will....

PARA. You cannot rise.

CYP. Is't true?

PARA. Be not afraid, Justina. Heavy
Are now your eyelids; they do close.
You try to open — cannot move. You are
So tired — tired — very tired. Slumber comes;
Your senses swoon from you. You slumber now *(in an almost incantatory tone)*
Quite deep — ay, deep — so deep — you sleep — you dream.

She falls asleep. Long pause.

CYP. Excellent — ay. But now then make her dream.

PARA. That will I do. And will with gentle words
Make her traverse a very destiny.

I call it so — you call it but a dream:
Are you contented?

CYP. I am all agog.
What pity that I did not call the neighbours.
Yet could I now —

PARA. Forbear; they would disturb.
He bends over her.

CYP. May I not list to what you're doing?

PARA. No.
I wish to see you marvel utterly.
Empty this goblet — patience have till then.

CYP. Ay, but no longer.

He drinks. PARACELSUS *whispers something in* JUSTINA'S *ear. The position of the two is such that neither his nor her face is visible.*

PARA, *(while* CYPRIAN *is still drinking*). I am finished.

CYP. (*putting down the goblet).* Well?

PARA. Awake, Justina! — wake!

CYP. Justina!

PARA. (*firmly*). Wake!

JUSTINA *stares at them both, and finally at* CYPRIAN, *gives a shriek, and runs away into her chamber,*

which she bolts on the inside.

CYP. *(is at first speechless*). Justina! — (*To* PARACELSUS) Tell me what this signifies!
What have you done?... *(At the door*) Justina!
(To PARACELSUS) Doth she flee me?
What was it you did whisper in her ear?

PARA. Nay, calm yourself, for it is all in play!
She loves you, too, as much as ever.

CYP. Why
Fled she away? With such a glance! — Justina!

PARA. Tarry! She loves you, yet remorse now racks —

CYP. Remorse?

PARA. Ay, so.

CYP. Explain you, an you please.

PARA, *(after a short pause).* A pretty stripling, who just took his leave —

CYP. A pretty — who?

PARA. Anselm, methinks, his name —

CYP. What hath he, then?

PARA. What often gallants have.

CYP. She dreams, perchance, that she the gallant loves?
An evil jest, forsooth.

PARA. What a conceit!

CYP. Well, then? Why did she flee me? Tell it quickly!

PARA. Well, since she dreams — withal — what troubles you?

CYP. Tell me; I wish to know it.

PARA. Well, she dreams
That she in Anselm's arms was rocked to rest.

CYP. That he —

PARA. The gallant did possess her e'en as you.

CYP. You gave that phantasy unto her.

PARA. Ay.

CYP. Then is your jest — make it undone — *(At the door)* Justina! *(very anxious*).

PARA. A dream, good sir — what signifies it more?
You know far better — you are living Life.

CYP. You could have other trials of your art
Elected. See how you have tortured her.
Speedily free her from the evil dream.

PARA. Why is it evil? It is sweet, perchance!

CYP. You are an insolent! Justina, listen! *(at the door).*
She's bolted now her chamber door.

PARA. Farewell.

CYP. You are not in your senses. Tarry here,
You damned juggler, and conclude the jest!
It doth suffice.

PARA. *(passionately*). Nay, it sufficeth not!
Do you preserve Justina as she is,
Guiltless, and verily guilty since she thinks it.
Most chaste — and verily unchaste, for her senses
Tingle with memory of wild delights.
So I will leave your faithful wife to you.

CYP. You're crazy, and shall verily atone,
That you on me, on Master Cyprian,
Should dare so insolent a jest ——

PARA. A jest?
When I see women of such quality,
Who should make happy men of mighty souls,
On such a lout, as you are, thrown away,
I feel anew embittered! And that she,
The woman once beloved by Paracelsus,
And whom they — after counsel — gave to you,
As though her life thus found its consummation —

CYP. Ay, unto me — not such a beggar as you.
In sooth! such damsels are for men like us.

PARA. I know it, they're for you; yet I know also,
One day with me fulfils a deeper yearning

Than fifty years with such an one as you.

CYP. Why boast you thus? As happy as a woman
Can verily be, is she, these thirteen years
Spent by my side.

PARA. But are you certain of it?
Since 'tis of men like you the natural gift,
Creatures of light approaching near you,
Into your sphere of dull and wretched smugness
Downwards to draw — think you, her home is here?
She's nothing but your guest here — even as I.
Wasted I see too much of loveliness
On a gorged insolence that plumes itself.
It is an outrage on the law of nature,
And I strive what amendment I may compass.

CYP. *(furious).* If you believed that verily, damned villain,
Why not compel her to go hence with you,
Since now you have her by your power enchanted?

PARA. I am no thief. You judge me ill. I wish
From you to take her, yet to no one give her.
Pure shall she bide — for you alone besmirched.
Therefore... farewell.

CYP. You shall without delay
Finish forthwith the witchcraft.

PARA. Nay... farewell.

CYP. Remain you here!

PARA. Who can command me?

CYP. I!
I will have you imprisoned, will impeach you '
For sorcery.

PARA. Why, do so. I have leisure.

CYP. They'd throw you down into a noisome dungeon.

PARA. I shall be silent, and Justina's dream
Preserve for ever.

CYP. They shall torture you.

Ay, they shall kill you.

PARA. And the final hope
With me, that yonder dream can ever finish,
For no one lives who can deliver her.

CYP. Madman! Justina, come to me... Justina,
Dost hear me not?

JUSTINA *(from within)*. O grace!

CYP. Unlock the door!
Justina!

He draws his sword, shatters the door to pieces, draws out JUSTINA, *who hides her face.*

JUSTINA. Grace!

CYP. Have fear of nothing, wife.

JUSTINA. I know full well thy goodness.

CYP. Thou art guiltless.

JUSTINA. Oh, mock me not.

CYP. Thou dreamest. Thou art guiltless.

JUSTINA. Oh, would ‘twere true! I shudder at myself.
I see myself within his arms, and feel
His kisses burn on neck and lips and cheeks ——

CYP. It is not true! The wizard —

JUSTINA. Ay, thou owest
To him thou knowst the truth.

CYP. It is not true!
Yet once again I turn to you — I know
I have insulted you; you damned varlet,
And do so still. I in your power have faith —
You see I must have faith therein — but now
Let it suffice, prithee! Finish this torture,
I’ll let you go scot-free — nay, glorify
In every place your most especial art,
But work it quickly that my wife awaken.

JUSTINA. I am awake. How strangely thou dost speak!

For heaven's sake! if so it be my guilt
Obscure your senses — Paracelsus, help!

CYP. Dost now entreat him that he should —

JUSTINA. Forgive,
O Cyprian, forgive. 'Tis verily passed —
I will be now to you the best o' wives!
A moment just of weakness hath it been;
It ne'er shall come again, be thou assured.
Yet then there shone the moon so strangely bright,
The perfume from our lilac bushes wafted,
And I was all alone i' the summer-house.

PARA. But further.

CYP. Silence.

JUSTINA. Let all now be told.
'Tis for the best.

CYP. I will not hear it.

PARA. Let her —
Who knows what you shall feel!

CYPRIAN *is much overcome*.

JUSTINA. I was alone
I' the summer-house — and thou wert in the tavern.

PARA. Wert never there?

CYP. What man hath never been?

JUSTINA. And then he came — and took me by the hand —
And kissed me — and did speak such fiery words —
And then — and then — O Cyprian, forgive!

CYP. Naught is there to forgive! Thou dream'st!

PARA, *(meaningly).* Who knows?

CYP. You knows't as I do!

PARA. Is she not a woman?
Anselm a man? Is there no summer-house?

CYP. You — say —

PARA. And if it verily were the truth
That I have simply shaken from her heart?

CYP. Why, you gave her the madness — yet you doubt?

PARA. I am a wizard merely — she's a woman!

CYP. You made me mad.

PARA. Who will vouchsafe to us
To know if this her dream was not as well her life?

CYP. You think, Justina — *(he hastens to her).*

PARA, *(to himself*). Doth the ironic flood
Of mine own magic close over mine head?
And the dividing limits e'en for me
Run into one another?

SCENE IX



CYPRIAN, JUSTINA, PARACELSUS. ANSELM comes. JUSTINA *gives a shriek,* ANSELM *starts and looks at them all.* CYPRIAN *and* PARACELSUS *observe him.*

Pause.

He attempts to approach JUSTINA.

CYP. *(stopping in front of Anselm).* She hath confessed it —

ANSELM. What?

PARA. How he doth quail!

JUSTINA. Out of my sight!

ANSELM. In what have I offended?

CYP. She hath confessed. So mind, you tell no lies!

ANSELM. Justina!

JUSTINA. Go! I will not see you more.
You took from me the peace of mine own soul,
Destroyed the gladness of our happy hearth,
Ruined too much for but a fleeting bliss!
How burns my soul with very shame, that I
Became the victim of your wanton youth
And mine unguarded senses. Woe for me,
That e'er I stepped into the summer-house.

ANSELM *(frightened).* For God's sake, hold your peace! You talk haphazard!

CYP. *(draws his sword).* Confess!

JUSTINA. Confess!

PARA. Confess!

ANSELM. Naught have I to confess.

CYP. Dwells no more boldness in your craven heart
Than what sufficeth to approach a woman?

ANSELM. Justina, this revenge lacks graciousness.

CYP. What, is't revenge that she is penitent?
Caitiff!

ANSELM. Your sword I will encounter
At any assignation; yet vouchsafe me
First to declare that my offence is slight.
No more I did than love your beauteous wife,
And dare to speak to her thereof.

CYP. But further! — further!

ANSELM. That is all!

JUSTINA. But nay!
Hell spare me... oh, will you not comprehend
That this is all in vain? — for I myself
In deep remorse confessed to my spouse.

ANSELM *(suddenly to* PARACELSUS). This is your machination, damned wizard!

CYP. Leave him in peace, I pray! I owe him much.
He brought the truth unto this house of lies;
He is my friend, and I do crave his pardon.

PARA. Nay, softly! As a medley of bright jewels,
Some false, some true, the last hour's fullness lies
Fully displayed; but what to cast away
And what to keep as profit, have I knowledge
At present just as little — as yourselves.
And more for mine own self than for your favour
I will the skein unravel that I wove.
Justina! Slumber!

ANSELM. I am all at sea!

PARA. *(firmly).* Sleep you!

CYP. What will you?

PARA. Slumber deep, Justina,
Ay, deep — quite deep — to sleep — so is it good!

JUSTINA *has sunk motionless on to the chair*.

PARA. Justina! Do you hear me?

JUSTINA *(sleepily).* I do hear.

PARA. Then mark you well! You have forgotten all
That passed from that same minute when I first
Sunk you in sleep, until the next when I
Shall bid you be awake — and this last hour
I hunt from out your mind, as though ‘t had never been;
And now —

CYP. And now? What help is all o’ this,
If she awakens and this hour shall vanish
From out her memory? What know I,’ then,
If she in dreaming spoke perchance the truth!

PARA. There I avail. Justina, mark! One thing
I do enjoin — be true when you awake,
So true as ne’er before — be you so true,
Nay, truer than your wont to your own self,
That like a clear flood i’ the gleaming sun
Your soul shall shine transparent to its bottom,
Until the even of this pregnant day
Free you from this last speech of sorcery.

CYP. But why to even only?

PARA. It sufficeth.
You shall rejoice you that the sun shall set,
Though she be best out of all womankind.

ANSELM. This riddle’s solving vainly I would compass.

PARA. Awake, Justina... be you true... awake!

JUSTINA *(opens her eyes and speaks at once, as though nothing had happened).* Now say — how long will you yet stare at me?
In vain — your magic worketh not at all.
Nay! had your gaze still as much potency
As in the days when you were Hohenheim —

I mean, for me — but that is long since over.
Oh, gallant Anselm — how came you in, pray?
I heard you not! Bid you adieu to us?

ANSELM. You know... Justina —

JUSTINA. It is good you leave,
And I shall first breathe truly when you’re home
In your sire’s castle.

ANSELM. You... do mean? —

JUSTINA. ’Tis time!
Had you one single night more tarried,
Then had we parted far less innocent;
Still feel I the last quiver of my youth,
Spring flattereth and beauty lures withal.
’Tis well, then, that you go as swift you can,
For oh! what would have been the finish of ‘t?
A little bliss and aye much pain and sorrow.
All that is spared to me. As a true wife *(to* CYPRIAN)
I can still look thee in thine eyes,
An thou dost guard me, thou canst trust in me.

CYP. By God, that will I do!

JUSTINA. A peaceful bliss,
Although not over-ardent, still’s the best.

SCENE X



CYPRIAN, JUSTIN A, PARACELSUS, ANSELM. *Enter* CECILIA.

ANSELM *(very glad when* CECILIA *comes).* My noble damsel, that again I see you
Affords much pleasure. I do take my leave —

I take my leave for ever now of Basel.

CEC. *(smiling).* So 'tis in earnest?

JUSTINA. Smilest thou?— 'tis right.

A childish dream departs. My case thou seest.

CEC. What says she then withal?

JUSTINA. Sweet child, thou wilt
Have soon forgot the pretty gentleman.

ANSELM. Cecilia... nay;... I feel as —

PARA. Listen well.

CEC. Justina... Brother... *(begging for help).*

CYP. Hush! She is inspired.

JUSTINA. See *(looking at* PARACELSUS), yonder man
I held most verily dear,
Ah, long ago — O Cyprian, how long?
When you went hence those thirteen years ago
Without farewell or word of coming back
I thought I'd die perforce. Had you that night,
That very night in which you left the city,
Again returned — oh, I had everything
That you had craved for given joyfully,
Although I knew full well the coming morrow
Took you for ever from me! So I loved you!
Who knows how many windows in the city
Open each night for one who never comes?

CYP. What do I hear? Oh, may the sun sink soon —

CEC. Justina —

JUSTINA. Theophrastus, think you still of it?
Yet see how all things somehow shape for good;
To-day I do thank God you left the city
That night, and that your courage failed you.
What then were I to-day? While unto you
The unbounded world with all its fame belonged,
Ruined I'd sit at home in shame and mockery —
Ay, Cyprian, so easy hadst thou lost me!
And not an inkling hadst — as is thy way,
Thinking that once I was betrothed to thee
Thou wast assured of my affection.
Marry! on many a night hadst thou but felt
How far from thee I was — truly! less proud
Hadst thou felt of the woman in thine arms.
Yet strong avails the present conquering
With little toil its greatest foe, the past —
And so thou wonnest me, my Cyprian,
And I am thine, and so would fain remain.

CYP. But now the far-off Past is here again.

JUSTINA. Aye... it is he — yet is't not he! Nigh seems
Twixt him and me a wider, deeper gulf
Than me from any other doth divide,
As one who would betoken — yet is not.
He stands by me — a shadow of my youth.
And even so, my sister, be assured,
With thee and Anselm shall it come to pass.
Thou wilt smile at the folly which today
Seemeth life's essence —

ANSELM *(affected).* Say not folly — no!
The fool was I — yet I dare not a word!
This hour appears to me full marvellous,
With pregnant truth it flashes and it gleams.
Who wrought it — I surmise; what way he did it —
I have no power to fathom; yet I know
That e'en in me a comprehension stirs,
And that I sorely erred, my wanton eye
To raise against an honourable dame.
Pray pardon of your grace my youthful pride,
My noble master, and stretch out your hand.
My erst distraction passeth by degrees,
Much comprehend I — and the clouds now vanish.

He looks at CECILIA.

SCENE XI



Previous characters, COPUS.

COPUS *(still at the door).* I greet you all. Knows yet your noble circle
The last intelligence?

CYP. Allow me first — *(introducing)*
Sir Doctor Copus, town physician here —

COPUS (*bowing*). Sir Theophrastus Hohenheim —

PAHA. I'm he.

COPUS. Then I may now convey the news myself,
I was announcing to this noble circle,
I come immediate from the City Council,
A resolution there was put and carried
To you, good sir, of highest import.

PARA. They drive me out?

COPUS. Oh, if 'twere that! Forgive me.

PARA. Decree's pronounced against me of arrest?

COPUS. What dream you of?

PARA. *(smiling).* The stake is threatening?

COPUS. How badly judge you this good town of Basel!
Hear, then: the Council will, to honour you,
Create a novel dignity, and chooses
You to be second town physician. I'm
The first. You marvel?

PARA. I do thank the Council.

COPUS. That means — you take the office?

PARA. I'm unable.

COPUS. Oh, think not so. You can! Since I'm the first,
So you, my friend, have good support in me.
In many a thing with pleasure I'll instruct you,
In ticklish cases give you of my counsel;

Masters are fain to see a modest scholar.

PARA. Forgive me, I'm not worthy such an office.
You would not be content, I'm sore afraid.
I do not here abide; I travel forth:
This very even do I leave this city.

COPUS. Is't true?

CYP. You go?

PARA. I bid you all adieu.

CYP. Before you go, explain you, for you leave
Us all bewildered here. Was it in earnest?
Was't play?

JUSTINA. How strangely question you!

COPUS. What means he?

PARA. It was a play! What were it otherwise?
What is not play we ply upon this earth,
Howe'er so great and so profound it seems?
For one will play with hordes of soldiers wild,
Another plays with superstition mad,
Some one perchance with suns and planets —
I play with human souls. And he alone
Will find a sense who seeks one.
Of others naught we know, naught of ourselves.
We ever play: who knows it, he is wise. (*Exit*.)

JUSTINA *(as though leaking up).*
What, then, hath happened here? I think I said
So much anent myself as I — ne'er wished to say.

COPUS. Nothing I fathom out of all I hear.
What hath occurred? What did the juggler here?

CYP. I know not if he wished benevolence,
Yet was it good, and therefore will we praise him.
A whirlwind came, who for a moment hath
Torn open all the portals of our souls,
And we have looked within us for a while....
'Tis over, and the portals close again —
Yet what I saw to-day, for future time,

Shall hold me safe from all excess of pride.
It was a play, yet I did find its sense,
And know that I shall keep the right road hence.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

The Green Cockatoo (1899)

GROTESQUERY IN ONE ACT

Original German Title: ‘Der grüne Kakadu’

Translated by Grace Isabel Colbron, 1917

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CHARACTERS
THE GREEN COCKATOO

CHARACTERS



EMILE, DUKE DE Cadignan

FRANÇOIS, Vicomte de Nogeant

ALBIN, Chevalier de la Tremouille

MARQUIS DE LANSAC

SEVERINE, his wife

ROLLIN, Poet

PROSPERE, host of "The Green Cockatoo," formerly manager of a theatre

Prospère's troupe:
HENRI
BALTHASAR
GUILLAUME
SCAEVOLA
JULES
ETIENNE
MAURICE
GEORGETTE
MICHETTE
FLIPOTTE

LEOCADIE, actress, Henri's wife

GRASSET, philosopher

LEBRET, tailor

GRAIN, a tramp

A POLICE SERGEANT

ARISTOCRATS, ACTORS and ACTRESSES

CITIZENS of Paris

The action takes place in Paris on the evening of July 14th, 1789, in Prospère's wine-room, "The Green Cockatoo."

THE GREEN COCKATOO



WINE-ROOM OF "THE Green Cockatoo."

A cellar room of moderate size into which seven steps lead down from a door at the right, well to the rear. There is another door in the back wall at the left, scarcely visible. About all the available space in the room is plied by plain wooden tables and chairs. The bar is in the center of the left wall, behind it are casks of wine fitted with bungpipes. The room is lit by small hanging lamps.

PROSPERE *is behind the bar,* GRASSET *and* LEERET *enter.*

Grasset (still on the steps). This way, Lebrêt. I know this source. My old friend and former manager always has a cask of wine hidden somewhere hereabouts when all Paris else is athirst.

Prospère. Good evening, Grasset — showing yourself here again? At odds with philosophy, eh? Have you a wish to take engagement with me again?

Grasset. In a manner, yes — I want wine. I am the guest, you the host.

Prospère. Wine, indeed? And where should I get wine, Grasset? They plundered all the wine shops of Paris last night — and I wager you had a hand in it.

Grasset. Bring wine, I say. For the rabble that will be here in an hour — *(He listens as if to some sound outside)* — do you hear anything, Lebrêt?

Lebrêt. It is like distant thunder.

Grasset. Well done, citizens of Paris! *(To PROSPERE.)* You surely have a cask in hiding for the rabble you expect later. Bring it out now. My friend and admirer here, Citizen Lebrêt, tailor of the Rue St. Honoré, will pay for all we drink.

Lebrêt. Yes, yes, I will pay. *(PROSPERE hesitates.)*

Grasset. Show him that you have money, Lebrêt. *(LEBRET takes out a well-filled purse.)*

Prospère. Well, I will see if — *(He fils two glasses from one of the casks.)* Where have you been, Grasset? At the Palais Royal?

Grasset. Yes, and I made a speech there, too. It is my turn now, friend Prospère. And do you know whom I followed with my speech?

Prospère. Well?

Grasset. Camille Desmoulins! Yes, I dared it! And tell me,
Lebrêt, which of us had the greater applause, Desmoulins or I?

Lebrêt. You did, beyond a doubt.

Grasset. And how did I bear myself?

Lebrêt. Magnificently.

Grasset. Do you hear that, Prospère? I stood on the table — I looked like some great monument — yes, I did. And all the thousand, the five thousand, the ten thousand, gathered around me just as they had gathered around Camille Desmoulins, and called to me, and cheered me —

Lebrêt. They cheered louder for you.

Grasset. Yes — not much, but still it was louder — and now they are storming the Bastille — and I may say they have followed my call — before the evening is out we will have taken it.

Prospère. Maybe — if the walls could fall before your speeches.

Grasset. Speeches? Have you no ears? They're shooting now. Our valiant soldiers are with us — they have the same hellish hatred for that accursed prison that we have — they know it is their fathers and their brothers who are behind those walls — but they would not shoot had they not heard us talk. Yes, my dear Prospère, great is the power of the intellect. *(To* LEBRET.) Where are the papers?

Lebrêt. Here they are. *(He draws a handful of pamphlets from his pocket.)*

Grasset. Here are the newest pamphlets given out in the Palais Royal. Here is one by my friend Cerutti, "A Record for the French People;" here is one by Desmoulins — he speaks better than he writes— "Free France" —

Prospère. And where will yours appear, that you're always telling me about?

Grasset. We need no more words, the time for deeds has come. A coward, who sits within his four walls today, — a man's place is in the streets.

Lebrêt. Bravo! Bravo!

Grasset. They've killed their Mayor in Toulon; they've plundered a dozen houses in Brignolles; we Parisians are the stupid dolts who endure everything —

Prospère. They can hardly say that of us now.

Lebrêt (has been drinking steadily). Arise! — citizens — arise!

Grasset. To arms! — shut up your place and come with us.

Prospère. I will come, at the proper time.

Grasset. When there's no longer any danger?

Prospère. I am as great a lover of Freedom as you are, friend — but I have my business.

Grasset. There is but one business for citizens of Paris today — and that is to set their brothers free.

Prospère. For those-who have nothing else to do, you mean.

Lebrêt. What's that? He's mocking us?

Prospère. No such intention. But see that you take yourselves off now. My performance will begin shortly, and I have no use for you then.

Lebrêt. A performance? Is this a theatre?

Prospère. It is. Your friend here played with us not two weeks ago.

Lebrêt. You played here, Grasset? Do you let the rascal make game of you unpunished?

Grasset. Calm yourself — it is true. I did play here. This is no ordinary wine-room, it is a den of thieves — come now.

Prospère. Payment first, please.

Lebrêt. If this is a den of thieves, I sha'n't pay a sou.

Prospère. Tell your friend where he is.

Grasset. This is a strange place. There are people here who play the criminal — and others who are criminals without knowing it.

Lebrêt. Indeed!

Grasset. I would like you to notice that what I have just said was extremely brilliant. It would make the success of an entire speech.

Lebrêt. But I don't understand a word of it all.

Grasset. I told you that Prospère was my former manager. He is still acting here with his troupe, but not in the usual way. My former colleagues sit round here and pretend to be criminals. Do you understand? They tell hair-raising stories that never happened — they speak of awful deeds which they never committed — and the audience that assembles to hear them enjoys the sensation of sitting in the same room with the most dangerous scum of Paris — with swindlers, thieves, and murderers.

Lebrêt. What sort of an audience is it?

Prospère. The most fashionable people of Paris —

Grasset. Noblemen-*Prospère.* Gentlemen of the Court —

Lebrêt. Down with them!

Grasset. This is something to their taste — this whips up their jaded senses. Yes — this is where I began,

Lebrêt, this is where I made my first speech, in pretended jest — and this is where I began to hate the dogs as they sat here with us — with their fine clothes, their perfumes, their rottenness. And I am well pleased, my good Lebrêt, that you should see the place from whence your great friend went forth to larger things — *(In a changed tone.)* Say, Prospère, if there should be any slip —

Prospère. Slip? How?

Grasset. In my political career — would you engage me again?

Prospère. Not at any price.

Grasset (easily). Why not? Don't you think there could be a chance for anyone beside your belovéd Henri?

Prospère. Apart from that — I'd be afraid you would forget yourself some day and really attack one of my paying customers —

Grasset (flattered). That might be possible —

Prospère. I — I can control myself.

Grasset. Of a truth, Prospère, I could admire your selfcontrol — did I not happen to know that you are a coward.

Prospère. My dear friend, I am satisfied with my own way of doing things. I find sufficient pleasure in telling them my true opinion of them, to their very faces — in reviling them to my heart's desire — while they look upon it as a joke.
That, too, is a way of relieving one's feelings. *(He draws a dagger and turns it to catch the light.)*

Lebrêt. What does this mean, Citizen Prospère?

Grasset. Don't be afraid, I wager the dagger is not even sharpened.

Prospère. You might lose your wager, friend. The day will come when the joke turns to bitter earnest — and I am ready for it.

Grasset. That day is near! It is a great age we live in.
Come, Citizen Lebrêt, we must join the others. Farewell,
Prospère — you will see me as one of the great ones — or never again!

Lebrêt (staggering). As one of the great — or — never.

(They both go out.)

Prospère (seats himself on a table, reads from one of the pamphlets). "The beast is in the noose, strangle it." Not bad, little Desmoulins. "Never was richer booty for a conqueror — forty thousand palaces and castles, two-fifths of all the wealth in France, will be the reward of bravery — those who think themselves the conquerors will be overthrown, and the nation will be purged." *(The POLICE SERGEANT enters.)*

Prospère (measures him). The rabble is appearing in good season tonight.

Sergeant. Spare your jokes, friend Prospère. I am the Police Sergeant for your district.

Prospère. And what can I do for you?

Sergeant. I have been ordered to attend this evening's performance in your place here.

Prospère. I am greatly honored.

Sergeant. That's not the point, good Prospère. The authorities wish to know just exactly what happens here. For some weeks —

Prospère. It is a pleasure resort, Sergeant, nothing more.

Sergeant. Let me talk, please. For some weeks, so they say, this place has been the scene of vile orgies.

Prospère. The rumor is false, Sergeant. Jokes, harmless jokes, that is all.

Sergeant. That's the way it begins, I know. But it ends very differently, my report says — you were an actor?

Prospère. A manager, Sergeant. Manager of an excellent troupe which played last in St. Denis.

Sergeant. That is immaterial. *(He reads from a notebook.)* You inherited some money —

Prospère. Hardly worth mentioning.

Sergeant. Your ensemble scattered?

Prospère. So did the money.

Sergeant. Very good. *(Both smile, then seriously again.)*
You opened this wine-room?

Prospère. Which paid very badly.

Sergeant (still reading). Then you hit upon an idea to which a certain originality cannot be denied.

Prospère. You flatter me, Sergeant.

Sergeant. You collected your troupe again, and let them give a performance, which has been characterized as peculiar — and somewhat doubtful.

Prospère. If it were at all doubtful, Sergeant, I should not have my audience — I may say — the most aristocratic audience in Paris. The Vicomte de Nogeant is my daily guest. The Marquis de Lansac comes very frequently, and the Duke de Cadignan, Sergeant, is the most ardent admirer of my leading actor, the celebrated Henri Baston.

Sergeant. And an admirer also of the art — or the arts — of your actresses?

Prospère. If you could see my little actresses, Sergeant, you would not blame anyone for admiring them.

Sergeant. Enough of this. It has been reported to the authorities that the amusement offered by your — what shall I say?

Prospère. The word "artists" might suffice.

Sergeant. I shall use the word "hirelings" — the amusement offered by your hirelings goes beyond the bounds of the permissible. The report says that there are speeches made by — what shall I say? by your artificial criminals which — what does the report say? — *(He reads from his notebook)* — which are not only immoral — that would not trouble us — but which are most seditious and liable to do harm — this cannot be a matter of indifference to the authorities, particularly not in such troublous times.

Prospère. My dear Sergeant, my only answer to all this is a polite invitation to visit the performance. You will soon discover that there is nothing seditious going on — mainly because my audience would not be susceptible to sedition.
We give a theatrical performance, that is all.

Sergeant. I am not allowed to accept your invitation, but
I shall remain here in my official capacity.

Prospère. I can promise you a very pleasant evening. But if you permit a word of advice, I would recommend that you exchange your official uniform for civilian clothes. The spontaneity of my artists — and the mood of my audience, would both suffer from the presence of a police official in uniform.

Sergeant. You are right, M. Prospère. I will disappear for a short time and return as a young gentleman of fashion.

Prospère. That will be easy for you, Sergeant. And you are equally welcome as a vagabond — that would not attract attention here — only not as police official.

Sergeant. Good evening, then. *(He goes towards door.)*

Prospère (bowing). When will that blessed day dawn, when you and your like — *(The SERGEANT meets GRAIN in the doorway. GRAIN, who is ragged and dirty, starts when he sees the SERGEANT. The SERGEANT looks at him sharply, then smiles and turns to PROSPERE.)*

Sergeant. One of your artists already? *(He goes out.)*

Grain (comes down, whining). Good evening.

Prospère (when he has looked him over sharply). If you *are* one of my actors I must compliment you — for I do not recognize you.

Grain. What did you say?

Prospère. Stop this nonsense and take off your wig. I want to know who you are. *(He pulls at GRAIN'S hair.)*

Grain. Ouch! —

Prospère. The devil — that is real hair — who are you? You seem to be a genuine tramp.

Grain. I am.

Prospère. Then what do you want of me?

Grain. Have I the honor of addressing Citizen Prospère? — host of "The Green Cockatoo?"

Prospère. I am he.

Grain. Grain is my name — or sometimes Carniche — and they sometimes call me the "Bellowing Brimstone": — but they imprisoned me under the name of Grain, Citizen Prospère, and that's the main point.

Prospère. Oh, I understand. You want an engagement here and are showing me what you can do. Good — continue.

Grain. Citizen Prospère, pray don't think me a swindler. I am a man of honor. When I tell you that I have been in prison, I am telling you the truth. *(PROSPERE looks at him suspiciously and GRAIN takes a paper from his pocket.)* Citizen Prospère, look at this. It will tell you that I was released yesterday afternoon at four o'clock.

Prospère (reading the paper). After an imprisonment of two years — why, this is — genuine.

Grain. Did you still doubt it, Citizen Prospère?

Prospère. But what did you do, to be imprisoned two years?

Grain. They would have hanged me — but fortunately I was still half a child when I murdered my poor aunt —

Prospère. Man! Why did you murder your aunt?

Grain. I should not have done it, Citizen Prospère, had she not been false to me, and with my best friend, too —

Prospère. Your aunt?

Grain. Yes. She was more to me than aunts usually are to their nephews. Our family relationships were peculiar.
I was embittered — deeply embittered. Shall I tell you about it?

Prospère. Yes, do. We may be able to come to an agreement.

Grain. My sister was still half a child when she ran away — and with whom do you think?

Prospère. I could not possibly guess.

Grain. With her uncle. Then he deserted her, left her with a child.

Prospère. A whole child — I hope.

Grain. Citizen Prospère — it is indelicate of you to joke on such subjects.

Prospère. Listen to me, you Bellowing Brimstone — these family affairs of yours bore me. Do you think I am here to listen to every chance vagabond's story of his murders? I suppose you want something of me?

Grain. I do, Citizen Prospère. I come to ask for work.

Prospère (scornfully). I call your attention to the fact that this is a pleasure resort — there are no aunts to murder here.

Grain. One such experience is enough for me, thank you.
I wish to become an honest man. I have been sent to you —

Prospère. By whom?

Grain. By a most amiable young man whom they put into my cell three days ago. Now he is alone there — Gaston is his name — you know him.

Prospère. Gaston? That explains why I haven't seen him the last three evenings. He is one of my best men for pickpockets — he can tell stories — the audience shook with laughter.

Grain. Yes — but now they have caught him.

Prospère. Caught him? He didn't really steal?

Grain. Yes, he did. But it must have been the first time, for he seems to have been incredibly clumsy at it. Just imagine — *(Confidentially)* — he puts his hand in a lady's pocket on the Boulevard des Capucines — and just pulled out her purse — like a real amateur. You inspire confidence, Citizen Prospère, so I'll confess to you there was a time when I would do that sort of little trick myself — but never without my dear father. Ah — while I was still a child — when we were all together — when my poor aunt was still alive —

Prospère. Stop that snivelling, it is very bad taste. Didn't you kill her yourself?

Grain. Alas, too late. But as I was going to say — take me into your service. I wish to reverse Gaston's method. He acted the criminal and then became one in earnest — I —

Prospère. I'll try you, your appearance will help you considerably. At the proper moment you can tell about your aunt — just as it happened — some one will start you off with a question.

Grain. I thank you, Citizen Prospère — and as for my salary —

Prospère. You play on trial tonight, I cannot pay you for that. You will have plenty to eat and drink, and a few francs for a night's lodging, if you need it.

Grain. I thank you. You can introduce me to the other players as a guest from the province.

Prospère. No, we'd better tell them at once that you are a real murderer — they will like that better.

Grain. Pardon me, I don't want to say anything to my own discredit — I can't quite understand —

Prospère. When you have been on the stage a little longer you *will* understand.

SCAEVOLA and JULES enter.)

Scaevola. Good evening, most genial Manager.

Prospère. Mine host, please. How often must I tell you that you spoil the whole effect if you call me manager?

Scaevola. Well, whatever you are — I don't believe we'll play tonight.

Prospère. Why not?

Scaevola. People won't be in the mood for it — there's a hellish noise in the streets and the mob before the Bastille are screaming like mad devils.

Prospère. What does that matter to us? We have had the noise now for months and our audience has never failed us. They enjoy themselves just the same.

Scaevola. Yes, with the enjoyment of people about to be hanged.

Prospère. If I could only live to see it!

Scaevola. But meanwhile give us something to drink, to put me in the right mood. I don't feel at all inspired tonight.

Prospère. That happens to you frequently, friend. Let me tell you that I wasn't at all satisfied with you yesterday.

Scaevola. May I ask why not?

Prospère. Your story of the house robbery was simply silly.

Scaevola. Silly?

Prospère. Yes, silly and quite unconvincing. You can't get your effect by mere yelling.

Scaevola. I never yell.

Prospère. You always yell. I see I must rehearse these things with you. I cannot depend upon your own ideas. Henri is the only one —

Scaevola. Henri! Always Henri! Henri is a ranter. My robbery yesterday was a masterpiece, Henri couldn't do it in a lifetime. If you are not satisfied with me, friend
Prospère, I shall go to some respectable theatre. *(Sees GRAIN.)* Who is this? He's not one of us. Are you

engaging new people? What sort of a make-up does he call that?

Prospère. Don't be alarmed, he is not a professional. He is a real murderer.

Scaevola. Oh, I see. *(He goes to GRAIN.)* Delighted to make your acquaintance. My name is Scaevola.

Grain. Thank you. They call me Grain. *(JULES has been walking up and down all this time, halting occasionally, like a man suffering from strong emotion.)*

Prospère. What's the matter with you, Jules?

Jules. I'm studying.

Prospère. Studying what?

Jules. Pangs of conscience. I'll show you a conscience stricken sinner tonight. Look at me — how do you like the furrow in my brow? Do I not look as if all the furies of hell were pursuing me? *(He rages up and down.)*

Scaevola (roars). Wine, bring wine!

Prospère. Keep cool, the audience hasn't arrived yet —

(HENRI and LEOCADIE come in.)

Henri (to PROSPERE). Good evening. *(With a light gesture towards the others.)* Good evening, gentlemen.

Prospère. Good evening, Henri. But what's this I see?
You're with Léocadie?

Grain (has been looking attentively at LEOCADIE, speaks aside to SCAEVOLA.) Why, I know her. *(Speaks further with him.)*

Léocadie. Yes, dear Prospère, it is I.

Prospère. I haven't seen you for a whole year. Permit me.

(Is about to kiss her.)

Henri. None of that, please. *(His eyes rest on her with pride and passion, but with a certain anxiety.)*

Prospère. Why, Henri, old friends like us! And your former manager, Léocadie!

Léocadie. Ah, those were pleasant days, Prospère.

Prospère. Why do you sigh? You've made your career — of course, it's easier for a beautiful young woman —

Henri (angrily). I will not hear it.

Prospère. You needn't scream at me so, just because you happen to be with her again.

Henri. Stop that talk — she is my wife — since yesterday —

Prospère. Your wife? *(To LEOCADIE.)* Is he joking?

Léocadie. No, he has really married me.

Prospère. My congratulations. Scaevola, Jules, Henri is married.

Scaevola (comes forward). Congratulations! *(Winks at*

LEOCADIE. JULES *shakes hands with both.)*

Grain (comes forward, speaks to PROSPERE). Strange — I saw this woman — just a few moments after they had let me out.

Prospère. How is that?

Grain. It was the first beautiful woman I had seen for two years. I was greatly moved — but there was another man with her — *(Talks to PROSPERE.)*

Henri (in a high-pitched tone of ecstasy, which must not be declamatory). Léocadie, my belovéd — my wife — all that has been is no more — a moment like this wipes out all the past. *(SCAEVOLA and JULES drop back. PROSPERE comes forward to HENRI.)*

Prospère. What moment?

Henri. A holy sacrament unites us now — that is more — far more, than mere human vows. God now watches over us — we can forget all that has gone before. A new life begins for us, Léocadie — our love is sacred, our kisses, however wild they may be, are holy now. Léocadie, my belovéd, my wife.

(With a passionate glance.) Is she not different now, Prospère? is not her glance clearer, her brow more pure? all that was, is wiped out — is it not so, my Léocadie?

Léocadie. Certainly, Henri.

Henri. And all is well with us. We leave Paris tomorrow. Léocadie appears tonight for the last time at the Porte St. Martin and this is my last evening with you.

Prospère (startled). Are you crazy, Henri! You want to leave me? — The manager of the Porte St. Martin won't think of letting Léocadie go? She is his greatest success — the men flock to see her, they say.

Henri. Be quiet! Léocadie goes with me — she will never leave me. Tell me you will never leave me, Léocadie? *(Brutally.)* Tell me —

Léocadie. I will never leave you, Henri.

Henri. If you did, I would — *(Pause.)* I am weary of this life, I want rest — peace.

Prospère. But what will you do with yourself, Henri? It is absurd. Listen. I have a suggestion to make. Take

Léocadie away from the Porte St. Martin, if you want to, but let her stay here with me. I'll engage her. I lack a clever actress anyway.

Henri. My decision is made, Prospère; we leave the city — we go out into the country.

Prospère. Into the country? Where?

Henri. To my old father, who lives all alone in his poor village — my father, whom I have not seen for seven years. He had scarcely hoped to see his lost son again — he will welcome me with joy.

Prospère. And what will you do there? The people are starving in the country. They're worse off even than in Paris here. What will you do with yourself there? You are not the man to till the fields — don't delude yourself into thinking you are.

Henri. I will prove that I am.

Prospère. There'll soon be no more grain growing in all
France — you go to certain misery.

Henri. To certain happiness, Prospère — is it not so, Léocadie? We've dreamed of it often — ah — I long for the peace of the great open stretches — yes, Prospère, in my dreams I see myself walking with her evenings across the fields, in an endless quiet — under a marvellously soothing sky. We will flee this horrible, this dangerous city, and a great peace will come over us. — Have we not often dreamed of it, my Léocadie?

Léocadie. Yes, we have often dreamed of it.

Prospère. Listen, Henri, think it over. I will raise your salary gladly, and I will give Léocadie just as much as I give you.

Léocadie. Oh Henri, do you hear that?

Prospère. I don't know of anyone who can take your place here. None of my people have such clever ideas as you do, and not one of them is as popular with our audience — don't leave me.

Henri. I can easily believe that you'll not find anyone to take my place.

Prospère. Stay here, Henri. *(He looks meaningly at LEOCADIE and she answers with a glance that intimates she will arrange it.)*

Henri. The parting will be hard, I promise you — for the others, not for me. I have prepared something for my last appearance today — something that will make them all shudder — they will feel the breath of coming annihilation, of the end of their world — for the end of their world is near. I shall not be here to see it. They will tell us of it out there, Léocadie, many days later. — But they will shudder tonight
I promise you. And you yourself, Prospère, you will say that Henri never played so well before.

Prospère. What will you play? Do you know, Léocadie?

Léocadie. He never tells me anything.

Henri. Does anyone realize what an artist I am?

Prospère. We do, of course we do. And that is why I say you should not bury a talent like yours in the country — you wrong yourself, you wrong the cause of art —

Henri. What do I care for art? I want peace, rest. You cannot understand it, Prospère; you have never loved —

Prospère. Oh —

Henri. As I love. I want to be alone with her — thus only,
Léocadie, can we forget it all. And we shall be happy — happier than ever mortals before us. We will have children. You will be a good mother, Léocadie — and a good wife — all else — all, will be wiped out forever — *(There is a long pause.)*

Léocadie. It is growing late, Henri, I must be at the theatre. Good-bye, Prospère. I am glad I've finally seen this celebrated place of yours where Henri scores such triumphs.

Prospère. Why have you never been here before?

Léocadie. Henri did not wish it — he does not want me to sit about with the men, you know.

Henri (goes back). Let me have a taste of that, Scaevola.

(He drinks.)

Prospère (alone with LEOCADIE). (Aside to her.) Henri is a fool — you have done worse things than that.

Léocadie. No remarks, please.

Prospère. I warn you, you Canaille, have a care — he will kill you some day.

Léocadie. What's the matter now?

Prospère. You were seen with one of your fellows, only yesterday.

Léocadie. Idiot, do you know who that was —?

Henri (turns suddenly). What are you saying to her? No whispering, please — no secrets from me — she is my wife now.

Prospère. What did you give her for a wedding present?

Léocadie. Oh, he never thinks of such things.

Henri. You shall have your present today.

Léocadie. What?

Scaevola and Jules. What are you going to give her?

Henri (absolutely serious). When your scene is out, you may come here to see me act. *(The others laugh.)* No woman ever had a more costly present. Come now, Léocadie. Au revoir, Prospère; I will be back shortly. (HENRI *and* LEOCADIE *go out.* FRANÇOIS, VICOMTE DE NOGEANT *and* ALBIN, CHEVALIER DE LA TREMOUILLE, *come in together.)*

Scaevola. What a contemptible braggart!

Prospère (to the newcomers). Good evening, pigs. *(ALBIN starts.)*

François (pays no attention'). Was not that little Léocadie of the Porte St. Martin who went out there with Henri?

Prospère. Surely it was. I suppose she could make even you remember that you're something of a man, if she tried hard, eh?

François (laughing). Possibly. We are early, it seems.

Prospère. You can amuse yourself with your minion, for a time. *(ALBIN starts angrily.)*

François. Don't do that — I told you what it was like here. Bring us wine.

Prospère. I will. But the time will come when you will be glad to get water from the Seine.

François. Possibly. However, I want wine today, and of the best.

(PROSPERE goes to the bar)

Albin. What a dreadful man!

François. It is all a joke, I tell you. But there are places where you might hear such things said in earnest.

Albin. Is it not forbidden?

François (laughs). It's easy to see you are fresh from the province.

Albin. It's nearly as bad down our way these days: the peasants are becoming alarmingly insolent. We hardly know what to do about it.

François. The poor devils are hungry, that's the whole secret.

Albin. But how can I help that? Or my great-uncle either?

François. Why your great-uncle?

Albin. They held a meeting in our village and they called my great-uncle, the Count de Tremouille, a grain usurer — just imagine.

François. Was that all?

Albin. Well, I must say —

François. We will go to the Palais Royal tomorrow, and you'll hear some speeches that will surprise you. But we let them talk — it is safest. They are good souls at bottom; it is wisest to let them vent their feelings this way.

Albin (looking at SCAEVOLA and JULES). What suspicious looking fellows — how they stare at us. *(He puts his hand to the sword.)*

François (seizes ALBIN'S hand). Don't be a fool. *(To the actors.)* You needn't begin until more audience comes in.

(To ALBIN.) Those are the actors, the most respectable people imaginable. I warrant you, you have sat at table with far worse rogues.

Albin. But they were better dressed.

(PROSPERE *brings them the wine.* MICHETTE *and* FLIPOTTE *come in)*

Francois. Good evening, children, come here to us.

Michette. Here we are — come on, Flipotte. She's still so shy.

Flipotte. Good evening, young gentleman.

Albin. Good evening, ladies.

Michette. What a dear boy! *(She seats herself on his knee.)*

Albin. Please explain, François, are these respectable women?

Michette. What's that he says?

François. The women who come here? Don't be so absurd, Albin.

Prospère. What do the Duchesses command?

Michette. Sweet wine for me.

François (pointing to FLIPOTTE). Your friend?

Michette. We live together, and we haven't but one bed between us.

Flipotte (with a blush). Will you find that inconvenient when you come to see her?

She seats herself on FRANÇOIS' knee.)

Albin. I should not call her very shy.

Scaevola (rises, comes to table, speaks with gloomy mien). Have I found you at last? *(To ALBIN.)* Miserable seducer, she is mine — *(PROSPERE watches him.)*

François (to ALBIN). A joke, I tell you.

Albin. She is not his?

Michette. I shall sit where it pleases me. *(SCAEVOLA stands still with clenched fist.)*

Prospère (behind him). Well?

Scaevola. Ha! Ha!

Prospère (takes him by the collar, speaks aside to him) Is that all you can do? You haven't a sou's worth of talent. You can't do anything but yell.

Michette (to FRANÇOIS). He was much better the other evening.

Scaevola (to PROSPERE). I'm not in the mood yet. I'll do it better when there are more people present. I need an audience.

(Enter the DUKE DE CADIGNAN)

Duke. In full blast already? *(MICHETTE and FLIPOTTE run to him.)*

Michette. My sweet Duke!

François. Good evening, Emile. *(Introducing.)* My young friend Albin, Chevalier de la Tremouille — Duke de Cadignan.

Duke. I am charmed to meet you. *(To the girls who cling to him.)* Not so close, girls. *(To ALBIN.)* You've come to have a look at this queer wine-room?

Albin. It quite dazes me.

François. The Chevalier has only just come to Paris.

Duke (laughing). You have chosen a good time to come.

Albin. Why?

Michette. He's using another delicious perfume! There isn't a man in Paris smells so sweet.

Duke. She is thinking of the seven or eight hundred others whom she knows as well as she knows me.

Flipotte. May I play with your sword? *(She draws out his sword and lets it sparkle in the light.)*

Grain (aside to PROSPERE). That was the man — the man who was with her. *(He talks further to him, and PROSPERE seems surprised.)*

Duke. Henri not here yet? *(To ALBIN.)* When you see Henri you will not regret coming here.

Prospère (to the Duke). So you are here again? Charmed — but I sha'n't have that pleasure long.

Duke. Why not? I rather like it here.

Prospère. I believe that. But you are likely to be one of the first to go —

Albin. What does he mean?

Prospère. He understands — the most fortunate will be the first to fall. *(He goes back to the bar.)*

Duke (after a moment's thought). If I were king I would make that man my Court Jester — that is, I would have many jesters, but he should be one of them.

Albin. What did he mean? That you were too fortunate?

Duke. Chevalier, he means —

Albin. Oh pray do not call me Chevalier, they all call me Albin. Because I look so young, you know.

Duke (smiling). Gladly. But you must call me Emile.

Albin. If you permit it, Emile.

Duke. These people grow alarmingly witty.

François. Why alarming? It reassures me — As long as the mob is in a mood for jesting, nothing serious can happen.

Duke. The jests are passing strange, sometimes. I have just heard of something that set me thinking.

François. Tell us about it.
Michette and Flipotte. Yes, tell us, sweet Duke.

Duke. Do you know Lelange?

François. The village? Why yes, the Marquis de Montserrat has one of his finest hunting preserves there.

Duke. Quite right. My brother is with him at his castle, and he wrote me of this affair. They have a Mayor in Lelange who is very unpopular.

François. Can you name one who is not unpopular now?

Duke. But listen — the women of the village marched to the Mayor's house, carrying a coffin.

Flipotte. Carrying a coffin? Oh, I could never carry a coffin.

François. Be quiet, child, no one asks that you shall.

(To the DUKE.) Well?

Duke. Some of the women entered the Mayor's room and announced that he was about to die — but that he should be granted the honor of a burial.

François. Well, and did they kill him?

Duke. No — at least my brother did not mention that.

François. There, you see — braggarts, blusterers, clowns — that's all they are. Here in Paris they are yelling at the Bastille for a change — as they have done half a dozen times before.

Duke. Yes — were I the king, I should have put an end to it long ago.

Albin. Is it true that the King is so mild and gentle?

Duke. You haven't been presented to His Majesty yet?

François. The Chevalier is in Paris for the first time.

Duke. Yes, you are incredibly young — how old are you, if I may ask?

Albin. I only look so young. I am seventeen.

Duke. Seventeen — ah, how much lies before you yet! I am four and twenty — and already I begin to regret that I have lost so much of my youth.

François (laughing). That's good! You, Duke, you count each day lost, on which you have not won a woman or killed a man.

Duke. But one hardly ever wins the right woman — and invariably kills the wrong man. And so youth is lost after all — just as Rollin says —

François. What does Rollin say?

Duke. I was thinking of his new play that they are giving in the Comédie — he makes such a pretty comparison, do you remember?

François. I have no memory for verse.

Duke. Nor I unfortunately — I can only remember the sense of the words. He says that youth which is not enjoyed is like a feather-ball left lying in the sand instead of being tossed into the air.

Albin (precocious). Very true.

Duke. Is it not? The feathers lose their color and fall out — it is better to toss it somewhere into a bush where it cannot be found again.

Albin. How do you understand that, Emile?

Duke. It's more a matter of feeling — If I knew the verses you would understand it at once.

Albin. I believe you could write verse, Emile, if you wanted to.

Duke. Why do you think so?

Albin. Since you came in, all life seems to flame up brighter.

Duke (smiling). Indeed?

François. Will you not sit down here with us?

(Two more noblemen have come in and taken places at another table. PROSPERE brings them wine and appears to be insulting them.)

Duke. I can't stay now — but I will come back later.

Michette. Stay with me.

Flipotte. Take me with you. *(The girls try to hold him.)*

Prospère (joins them). Let him go, you are not bad enough for his taste — he's going to some woman of the street — that's where he feels happiest.

Duke. I'll return surely — I would not miss Henri.

François. Oh, just as we came in, we met Henri going out with Léocadie.

Duke. Yes, he has married her. Did you know it?

François. Really? What will the others say to that?

Albin. What others?

François (laughing). She is a great favorite.

Duke. And he wants to take her away from Paris — so I am told.

Prospère. Ah — so you are told. *(With a meaning glance at the DUKE.)*

Duke. It is too stupid. Léocadie was created to be one of the world's greatest courtesans.

François. Who does not know that?

Duke. Could there be anything more unreasonable than to take a human being out of his or her true profession?

(FRANÇOIS laughs.) No, I am not jesting now — a courtesan is born, not made — Just as is a conqueror or a poet.

François. You are paradoxical.

Duke. I am sorry for her — and for Henri. He should remain here — that is, not in this den — I would have him in the Comédie — although even there I feel as if no one could understand him as I do. I may deceive myself however — I often have that sensation where any artist is concerned who pleases me. But I will say, that were I not the Duke de Cadignan, I would prefer to be an actor — such an actor —

Albin. Like Alexander the Great.

Duke (smiling). Yes, like Alexander the Great. *(To*

FLIPOTTE.) Give me my sword. *(He puts his sword back in its sheath, speaking slowly.)* Is there a better way to mock at the world? He who can show himself to the world in any shape he may choose is greater than all of us — *(ALBIN looks at him in surprise.)* Don't trouble your head about anything I may say. It is true only in the moment that I utter it. Au revoir.

Michette. Give me a kiss before you go.

Flipotte. And me?

(The girls cling to the DUKE. He kisses them both, as they go to the door with him.)

During this:

Albin. What a marvellous man!

François. True — but the fact that such men exist is a sufficient reason for not marrying.

Albin. Tell me what sort of women those are.

François. They are actresses of Prospère's troupe. He's now the host of this wine-room. They never did much more than they are doing now, however.

Guillaume (rushes in breathless, staggers to where the actors sit, breathing painfully, with his hands clasped to his heart). Saved — I am saved!

Scaevola. What is the matter? What has happened?

Albin. What is the matter with the man?

François. Listen now, this is part of the performance.

Albin. Oh —

Michette and Flipotte (joining Guillaume). What is it? What has happened?

Scaevola. Sit down — take a drink —

Guillaume. More wine, Prospère, more wine. Ah, how I ran — my tongue cleaves to my palate — they are at my heels.

Jules (starts). Hush — they are at our heels, always —

Prospère. Come, tell us what has happened? *(Aside to the actors.)* More movement there — livelier!

Guillaume. Women — where are the women? *(Throws his arm around FLIPOTTE.)* Ah, that gives fresh strength again. *(Suddenly to ALBIN who is quite startled.)* Devil take me, boy, if I thought I should ever see

you in this life again. *(As if listening.)* They are coming — they are coming. *(He runs to the door.)* No — nothing. It is nothing. *(Back again.)*

Albin. How odd? — there really is a noise outside, as if many people were hurrying past — do they stage that from here?

Scaevola (aside to JULES). He does that trick every time — stupid.

Prospère. Tell us why they are at your heels.

Guillaume. Oh, it's nothing of importance. But if they caught me it might cost me my head. I set fire to a house —

(During this scene more young noblemen come in and take places at the tables.)

Prospère (aside). Go on, go on.

Guillaume. Go on? Isn't that enough?

François. Why did you set fire to the house?

Guillaume. Because the President of the Supreme Court lived in it. We've chosen him to begin with — we wish to teach the good house-owners of Paris that it is dangerous to have tenants who can send us poor devils to prison if they so please.

Grain. That is good — that is good.

Guillaume (looks at GRAIN in surprise, then continues). All such houses must be razed — three more such men as I am and there'd soon be no judges left in Paris.

Grain. Death to all judges!

Jules. There is one judge whom we cannot destroy.

Guillaume. I'd like to know who he is.

Jules. The Judge within our own conscience.

Prospère (aside). That's insipid, stop it. Scaevola, roar your loudest — this is the moment.

Scaevola. Bring wine, Prospère, bring wine — we will drink to the death of all the judges in France.

(During the last words, the MARQUIS DE LANSAC, SEVERINE, his wife, and the Poet, ROLLIN, enter from the street)

Scaevola. Death to all those who now hold power — death!

Marquis. You see, Séverine, this is the way they receive us.

Rollin. I warned you, Marquise.

Séverine. And why should you?

François (rising). Marquise! is it really you? *(He kisses her hand.)* Good evening, Marquis, — greetings, Rollin — you venture to enter here, Marquise?

Séverine. I have heard so much about this place — and then we seem to be out for adventure today.

Marquis. Yes, just fancy, Vicomte, where do you suppose we have been? To the Bastille.

François. Are they still making such a noise there?

Séverine. Noise indeed — it looks as if they intended to storm the prison.

Rollin (declaims).
Like to the flood, that breaks upon the rocks
In anger grim that his own child, the earth,
Should dare resistance.

Séverine. Don't, Rollin — we halted our carriage quite close — it was well worth seeing. Great crowds are always magnificent.

François. Yes — if only they didn't smell so vilely.

Marquis. And then my wife insisted upon us bringing her here.

Séverine. Well, and what is there so remarkable about this place?

Prospère (to the MARQUIS). You here, too, you dried-up old rascal? Did you bring your wife because you were afraid to leave her at home alone?

Marquis (with a forced laugh). He is such an original.

Prospère. Have a care that you do not lose her here. These fine ladies sometimes take a fancy to see what a real vagabond is like.

Rollin. I cannot stand this, Séverine.

Marquis. I warned you, my dear — we can still go if you wish it.

Séverine. What is the matter? I think it charming here. Sha'n't we sit down?

François. Marquise, will you permit me to introduce the Chevalier de la Tremouille, who is also here for the first time? Marquis de Lansac, Rollin, the celebrated poet.

(They bow to each other and all sit down)

Albin (aside to François). Is she one of the actresses, or —
I am quite confused.

François. Don't be so dull-witted. That is the real wife of the Marquis de Lansac, a lady of position.

Rollin (aside to SEVERINE). Tell me that you love me?

Séverine. Yes, yes, but don't ask me so often.

Marquis. Have we lost any good scenes?

François. Not much — that fellow there is acting the incendiary.

Séverine. Chevalier, are you not the cousin of little Lydia de la Tremouille who was married today?

Albin. I am, Marquise. The wedding was the main reason for my coming to Paris.

Séverine. I remember seeing you in the church.

Albin (embarrassed). I am greatly flattered, Marquise.

Séverine (to ROLLIN). What a dear boy.

Rollin. Ah, Séverine, you never saw the man yet who did not please you.

Séverine. Oh yes, one — so I married him at once.

Rollin. And yet I fear there are moments when even your own husband attracts you.

Prospère (brings them the wine). Here is your wine. I wish it were poison, but I am not permitted to give you that yet — Canaille!

François. The time will come, Prospère.

Séverine (to ROLLIN). Who are those two pretty girls? Why don't they come nearer? As I am here I want to see and do all that there is to be seen and done. Thus far, I think it is most disgustingly stupid.

Marquis. It will be livelier soon.

Séverine. The street is by far the most amusing place these days. Just imagine what happened to us yesterday as we were driving down the Promenade de Longchamps —

Marquis. My dear Séverine, why mention that —

Séverine. One fellow sprang up on the step of our carriage and screamed into our faces, "Next year you'll stand up behind your coachman and we will ride in your carriages."

François. That is rather strong.

Marquis. The less said about these things the better, I think. Paris is in fever — it will soon pass over.

Guillaume (suddenly). I see flames — red flames — everywhere — high red flames.
Prospère (aside to him). That's a madman, not a criminal.

Séverine. He sees flames?

François. This is only preliminary fun, Marquise.

Albin (to ROLLIN). I can't tell you how all this confuses me.

Michette (comes to MARQUIS). I haven't said good evening to you yet, you dear old pig.

Marquis (in embarrassment). She is joking, Séverine.

Séverine. It sounds quite real. Tell me, little one, how many lovers have you had?

Marquis (to FRANÇOIS). IS it not remarkable how the
Marquise can adapt herself to any situation?

Rollin. It is indeed admirable.

Michette. Have you counted yours?

Séverine. I did — when I was still as young as you are.

Albin (to ROLLIN). Tell me, M. Rollin, is the Marquise acting, or is she really — I can't tell what is true and what is false here.

Rollin. Reality — acting — can you always tell the difference,
Chevalier?

Albin. Why, yes, I think so.

Rollin. I cannot — and what I find so remarkable here is that the apparent differences are done away with. Truth dissolves into pretense, pretense into truth. Look at the Marquise now — see how she chats with those women as if she were one of themselves — and yet she is —

Albin. Something quite different.

Rollin. I thank you, Chevalier.

Prospère (to GRAIN). What was that story?

Grain. What story?

Prospère. The story about your aunt, the affair that cost you two years in prison?

Grain. I told you, I strangled her.

François. He's weak. He must be an amateur. I haven't seen him here before.

(GEORGETTE comes in dressed like a prostitute of the lowest grade)

Georgette. Good evening. Is my Balthasar here yet?

Scaevola. Georgette, come here and sit down by me. Your
Balthasar will settle his affair all right.

Georgette. If he isn't here in ten minutes, he hasn't settled it right — he'll not be here at all then.

François. Watch her, Marquise. In real life she's the wife of this Balthasar she is talking about. She's playing a low street-walker, and Balthasar is her bully. But she's really the most faithful wife in all Paris.

(BALTHASAR comes in, GEORGETTE runs to him, embraces him)

Georgette. My Balthasar!

Balthasar. That affair's settled. *(The others are quiet and listen.)* It was hardly worth the trouble — I'm almost sorry for him. You should choose your people more carefully, Georgette. I'm sick of killing promising youth for the sake of a few francs.

François. Excellent!

Albin. What?

François. His phrasing is so good.

(The POLICE SERGEANT comes in, in disguise, sits down at a table)

Prospère (aside to him). You've come just at the right time, Sergeant. This is one of my best actors.

Balthasar. I must look for some other livelihood. On my soul, I'm none of your cowards, but this is hard-earned bread.

Scaevola. I believe you.

Balthasar. I tell you, Georgette, you're too affectionate with those young men.

Georgette. What a silly he is. I have to be affectionate to win their confidence.

Rollin. Her words are deeply true.

Balthasar. If I ever thought that you had any feeling — with another man —

Georgette. Listen to that! This stupid jealousy will be his death yet.

Balthasar. I heard a sigh today — and that in a moment when his confidence was quite won —

Georgette. I can't stop pretending all in a moment.

Balthasar. Have a care, Georgette — the Seine is deep — *(Wildly.)* If you deceive me —

Georgette. Never — never.

Albin. I can't understand that at all.

Séverine. Rollin, that is the true philosophy —

Rollin. Do you think so?

Marquis. We can still go, if you wish it, Séverine.

Séverine. But why? I am beginning to enjoy myself.

Georgette. My Balthasar. I adore you — *(Embrace.)*

François. Bravo! — Bravo!

Balthasar. Who is that imbecile?

Sergeant. That is too much —

(MAURICE and ETIENNE come in dressed as young noblemen, but in shabby theatre costumes)

The Actors. Who are those?

Scaevola. Devil take me, but I believe it is Maurice and Etienne.

Georgette. Of course it is.

Balthasar. Georgette!

Séverine. What good-looking young men.

Rollin. It is painful to see how every attractive face excites you, Séverine.

Séverine. Well, what did I come here for?

Rollin. Then at least you might tell me that you love me.
Séverine (throws him a glance). You have a short memory.

Etienne. Where do you think we have been today?

François. Listen to them, Marquise, they are clever boys.

Maurice. We have been to a wedding.

Etienne. You have to dress up for that. Otherwise the confounded Secret Service police are after you at once.

Scaevola. Did you make a good haul?

Prospère. Yes, show us what you took.
Maurice (taking several watches from his coat). What will you give me for these?

Prospère. A louis for this one.

Maurice. I dare say.

Scaevola. That is all it is worth.

Michette. That is a lady's watch, give it to me.

Maurice. What will you give me for it?

Michette. Look at me, is that not enough?

Flipotte. No, look at me — give it to me —

Maurice. Dear children, I can have that pleasure any day without risking my head for it.

Michette. You are a conceited little monkey.

Séverine. I don't believe that is acting.

Rollin. No, there is a shred of truth in all of it — and that's just the charm.

Scaevola. What wedding was it?

Maurice. The wedding of Mlle, de la Tremouille — she married the Comte de Banville.

Albin. François, do you hear that? I assure you these are real thieves.

François. Nonsense. I know the men. I have seen them act a dozen times. They make a specialty of pick-pockets.

(MAURICE takes several purses from his coat)

Scaevola. You two can afford to be generous today.

Etienne. It was a very fine wedding. The entire nobility of
France was present and the King sent a representative.

Albin (excited). That is all true.

Maurice (throws money on the table). Here's something for you, my friends, to show you that we are loyal.

François. Theatrical properties, my dear Albin. We can have some of it, too. *(He rises and catches a few coins.)*

Prospère. Yes, take it — you've never earned any so honestly before.

Maurice (holds up a jeweled garter). To whom shall I give this? *(GEORGETTE, MICHETTE and FLIPOTTE snatch at it.)* Patience, my darlings. We'll talk it over. I will give it to the one who invents a new caress.

Séverine (to ROLLIN). Would you allow me to enter the competition?

Rollin. Séverine, you drive me mad.

Marquis. Shall we not go, Séverine? I really think —

Séverine. Oh, no, I am enjoying myself immensely. *(To* ROLLIN.) Ah, it excites me so —

Michette. How did you get that garter?

Maurice. There was such a crowd in the church — she thought I was making advances —

(They all laugh. GRAIN steals FRANÇOIS' purse)

Francois (returning to ALBIN). There, you see, they're only counters — are you satisfied now?

(GRAIN attempts to steal from the room)

Prospère (catches him, speaks low). Give me that purse at once — give it to me, I say, or you will regret it.

Grain. You needn't get rough about it. *(Gives him the purse.)*

Prospère. And do not leave this place. I have no time to search you now and you may have taken something else. Go back to your place. *(GRAIN obeys.)*

Flipotte: I'll win that garter!

Prospère (goes to FRANÇOIS, throws him the purse.) Here is your purse; it fell out of your pocket.

François. Thanks, Prospère. *(To ALBIN.)* YOU see what a respectable place we are in.

(HENRI has been present for some time, sitting at a rear table. He now rises suddenly)

Rollin. Henri — there is Henri.

Séverine. Is that the man you told me of?

Marquis. Yes. It is really for his sake that we come here.

(HENRI walks forward in, with exaggerated theatricism. He is still silent)

Actors. What is it, Henri?

Rollin. Observe his glance, what a world of passion — he plays the criminal from passion.

Séverine. I admire that.

Albin. Why doesn't he speak?

Rollin. He is in a trance — watch him now — he has committed some dreadful crime.

François. He is rather theatrical tonight — he seems to be preparing a monologue.

Prospère. Henri, where have you been?

Henri. I have just killed a man.

Rollin. What did I say?

Scaevola. Who?

Henri. My wife's lover.

(PROSPERE looks at him with a momentary flash of belief that it might be true)

Henri (looks up). Yes, I have done it — why do you all stare at me so? These things happen — what is there so remarkable about it? You all know what my wife is — it could end only that way —

Prospère. And she? Where is she?

François. See how the host appears to believe it. That makes it seem so real — *(Noise outside, not too loud.)*

Jules. What noise is that?

Marquis. Do you-hear it, Séverine?

Rollin. It sounds as if troops were passing.

François. Oh, no, that is our dear people of Paris — hear them growl. *(There is a slight uneasiness among the guests in the cellar, the noise outside dies away.)* Go on, Henri.

Prospère. Yes, tell us, Henri — where is your wife? Where did you leave her?

Henri. I am not alarmed for her; it will not kill her. This one or that one, what does a woman like that care? There are a thousand other handsome men in Paris — what does it matter?

Balthasar. So be it with all of them — all those who take our women from us.

Scaevola. With all who take what belongs to us?

Sergeant (to PROSPERE). Those are revolutionary speeches.

Albin. It is dreadful — those people really mean what they say!

Scaevola. Down with the usurers of France! Shall we wager that the fellow he found with his wife was one of those damned dogs who steal our bread as well.

Albin. Oh, let us go.

Séverine. Henri! Henri!

Marquis. Marquise!

Séverine. Oh, my dear Marquis, please ask the man how he discovered his wife's infidelity — or shall I ask him myself?

Marquis (after a vain attempt at refusal). Tell us how you found them, Henri?

Henri (has been sunk in thought). Do you know my wife? She is the most beautiful and the most depraved creature under the sun — and I loved her. We had known each other seven years; but she is my wife only since yesterday. In all these seven years there was not one day — not one single day, on which she did not lie to me — for everything about her lies, her eyes and her lips — her kisses and her smile.

François. He is a little declamatory today.

Henri. The old ones and the young ones; every one who interested her — every one who would pay her — every one even who desired her — could have her — and I knew it.

Séverine. Not every man can say that.

Henri. And yet she loved me, friends — can you understand that? Again and again she came back to me — came back from everywhere, from everyone — from the handsome ones and the ugly — from the clever and from the stupid ones — from the vagabonds and the cavaliers — came back to me always.

Séverine (to ROLLIN). If you could but understand that this coming back is real love.

Henri. Oh, how I suffered — torture — torture!

Rollin. It is heartrending.

Henri. And yesterday I married her. We dreamed a dream — no, it was I who dreamed — I dreamed I might take her away from here — away into silence and solitude — into the peace of the wide fields. We should live as do other happy couples. I dreamed of a child, too.

Rollin (very low). Séverine!

Séverine. Yes — yes —

Albin. François, this man speaks the truth.

François. Certainly, the love story is real — the murder is the fiction.

Henri. I was one day late — she'd forgotten one — otherwise — I believe — there wasn't one missing — but I found them together — and he is dead.

The Actors. Who? Who? How did it happen? Where is he?
Are they following you? How was it? Where is she?

Henri (more and more excited). I accompanied her to the theatre — it was to be the last time — I kissed her — at the door. She went up to her dressing room — I walked away like a man who has nothing to fear. But scarce a hundred paces from the house — it began in me — do you understand? — a horrible unease —

something pulled and tugged at me to go back — and I did turn and go back. — Then I was ashamed and walked away again — and again I was an hundred paces from the theatre — and again it seized and tore me — and I returned again. Her scene was over — she hasn't much to do — she stands a short time on the stage — half naked — and then she is through. I stood before her dressing room — I put my ear to the door and listened — I heard whispering — I could not hear the words. The whispering stopped — I broke open the door. *(Screams like a wild animal.)* It was the Duke de
Cadignan — and I killed him —

Prospère (who now believes it to be true). Madman!

(HENRI looks up, gazes at PROSPERE as if dazed.)

Séverine. Bravo! Bravo!

Rollin. O Marquise, what are you doing? The moment you applaud, you drag it all down to the level of an ordinary theatre — and the delicious shivery sensation is lost.

Marquis. I can't say that I find the shivers so delightful.
Let us applaud, friends, and free ourselves from this spell.

Prospère (comes to HENRI, during the applause, whispers), Henri, save yourself. Flee for your life!

Henri. What — what?

Prospère. That is enough — hurry now — get away from here.

François. Silence there! — listen to what our host is saying.

Prospère (after a second's thought). I tell him that he must get away before the watch at the city gates have been notified. The handsome Duke was a favorite with the king — they will put you to the wheel! Ah, had you but killed that wretch, your wife, instead!

François. What splendid ensemble work! — magnificent!

Henri. Prospère, it is you or I that is mad now. *(He tries to read the other's eyes.)*

Rollin. It is marvellous — we all know that he is acting — and yet if the Duke de Cadignan should come in now, he would seem like a ghost to us.

(The noise outside has been growing stronger for some time — the door is thrown open, faces took in — yells and shouts are heard — people press in at the door, led by GRASSET, LEBRET following him. Shouts of "Liberty! liberty!" outside)

Grasset. Here we are friends — this is the place.

Albin. What is that? Is that part of the play?

François. No —

Marquis. What does this mean?

Séverine. Who are these people?

Grasset. This way, friends. As I told you — my friend Prospère has always an extra barrel of wine hidden somewhere — and we have earned it tonight. Friends — brothers — we have taken it — we have taken it!

(Shouts outside "Liberty! Liberty!")

Séverine. What is happening?

Marquis. Let us go — the mob is crowding in.

Rollin. How do you think to get out?

Grasset. The Bastille has fallen — the Bastille has fallen!

Prospère. What's that you're saying? — Is he telling the truth?

Grasset. Can't you hear? *(ALBIN puts his hand to his sword.)*

François. No — don't do that — we are lost if you do —

Grasset (staggers down the steps). If you hasten, you can see a merry sight out there — you can see the head of our beloved Delaunay on the top of a tall pole.

Marquis. Is the man crazy?

Shouts. Liberty! — Liberty!

Grasset. We've lopped off a dozen of their heads. The Bastille is ours — the prisoners are free! Paris belongs to the people!

Prospère. Do you hear? Do you hear? Paris is ours!

Grasset. See! — See! — now he has courage! Scream all you want to, Prospère, you cannot come to harm now.

Prospère (to the noblemen). What do you say to this, you pigs? The comedy is over —

Albin. Did I not say so?

Prospère. The people of Paris have conquered.

Sergeant. Quiet there — *(Several laugh.)* I forbid the continuation of this performance.

Grasset. What imbecile is this?

Sergeant. Prospère, I make you responsible for these revolutionary speeches —

Grasset. Is the man crazy?

Prospère. The comedy is over, don't you understand? Henri, tell them — you can tell them now; we will protect you — the people of Paris will protect you —

Grasset. Yes, the people of Paris.

(HENRI stands as if dazed)

Prospère. Henri has really murdered the Duke de Cadignan.

François and Marquis. What's that?

Albin and Others. Henri! What does this all mean?

Prospère. He found him with his wife — and he killed him.

Henri. But it isn't true!

Prospère. You need have no fear now — you can shout it out for all the world to hear. An hour ago I could have told you myself that your wife was the Duke's mistress — by God, I was near telling you — you — Bellowing Brimstone, you — we knew it, didn't we? — you saw them.

Henri. Who saw them? Where were they seen?

Prospère. What does that matter now? The man's crazy! — you killed him — what more could you do?

François. For Heaven's sake — is this true or not?

Prospère. Yes, it is true.

Grasset. Henri, you must be my friend — hurrah for Liberty! — Liberty!

François. Henri — won't you speak?

Henri. She was his mistress? She was the Duke's mistress? I did not know it — and he still lives — he *lives* —

(Strong emotion in the audience)

Séverine. What is the truth now?

Albin. My God —!

(The DUKE pushes his way through the crowd on the steps)

Séverine (first to see him). The Duke!

Several Others. The Duke!

Duke. Why, yes — what is the matter?

Prospère. Are you a ghost?

Duke. Not that I know — let me pass here.

Rollin. Shall we wager that it is all part of the comedy? That mob there are Prospère's troupe — Bravo Prospère! It was a great success.

Duke. Are you still trifling here? While outside — do you not know that things are happening outside —? I have seen the head of Delaunay carried past me on a pole —
Why do you all look at me like this? *(Comes forward.)*
Henri —

François. Have a care of Henri! *(HENRI hurls himself at the DUKE like a madman and buries his dagger in his throat.)*

Sergeant. This is going too far.

Albin. He bleeds!

Rollin. This is murder!

Séverine. The Duke is dying!

Marquis. I am inconsolable, my dear Séverine, to think I should have brought you here just today.

Séverine. And why? *(With difficulty.)* It was a rare chance — one cannot see a real Duke really murdered every day —

Rollin. I am still dazed.

Sergeant. Quiet there — no one must leave the place.

Grasset. What does the fool mean?

Sergeant. I arrest this man in the name of the law.

Grasset (laughs). We make the laws now, imbecile. Out with this rabble here! He who kills a Duke is the friend of the people — hurrah for liberty!

Albin (draws his sword). Make way there — follow me, friends.

(LÉOCADIE pushes in through the crowd on the steps)

Several Voices. Léocadie!

Others. His wife!

Léocadie. Let me in here — where is my husband! *(She runs forward, sees what has happened, screams.)*

Who did that? Henri?

(HENRI looks at her)

Léocadie. Oh, Henri, why did you do it?

Henri. Why?

Léocadie. Ah yes, I know — it was for my sake — ah no — no — say it was not that — I am not worth it — I am not worth it!

Grasset (beginning a speech). Citizens of Paris, let us celebrate our victory. Chance has led us through the streets of Paris to this agreeable resort — we could not have hit upon a better place — nowhere could the cry of "Liberty forever." sound more beautiful than beside the corpse of a Duke.

Shouts. Liberty forever!

François. We had better go — the mob is quite mad —

Albin. Shall we leave them the body?

Séverine. Liberty forever! Liberty!

Marquis. Are you crazy?

Citizens and Actors. Liberty — Liberty forever!

Séverine (at the head of the group of aristocrats as they go towards the door, aside to ROLLIN). Rollin, wait before my window tonight — I will throw down the key as before — we will have an hour of bliss — my nerves are deliciously excited.

Shouts. Hurrah for liberty — hurrah for Henri!

Lebrêt. Watch the dogs — they are running away.

Grasset. Let them go for today — let them go — they will not escape us!

CURTAIN

Living Hours (1902)



A CYCLE OF FOUR ONE-ACT PLAYS

Original German Title: ‘Lebendige Stunden’

Translated by Grace Isabel Colbron, 1917

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PART I. LIVING HOURS



CHARACTERS



ANTON HAUSDORFER

HEINRICH

BORROMÄUS, gardener

LIVING HOURS



A carefully tended little garden in a suburb of Vienna. A small house fills the right side of the stage, the veranda towards the garden. Three steps lead down from the veranda. Under a spreading tree on the left side of the stage, down towards the front, is a little table surrounded by several chairs, one of them a comfortable armchair. A high iron railing running from the left side at back over to the house, separates the garden from the street. Beyond are the trees and grassy stretches of a park. It is early
Autumn, near the close of day. Deep stillness broods over the garden. BORROMÄUS, *the gardener, is working at a flower-bed. He is an old man with rather longish gray hair.* ANTON HAUSDORFER *comes slowly down the steps from the veranda.* HAUSDORFER *is nearly sixty, smoothshaven with close-cut, gray hair but young eyes. He wears a quiet dark suit, easy in fit, but well made, and a broadbrimmed, dark straw hat.*

Hausdorfer. Good evening, Borromäus.

Borromäus. Good evening, sir. You've been to the city this afternoon, haven't you, sir?

Hausdorfer. No.

Borromäus. I thought maybe, sir, because you didn't take your coffee out here in the arbor this afternoon either.

Hausdorfer. No, I did not go to town. I was in the house, lying on the sofa. I had a bit of a headache. What are you doing now? You'll soon have the entire garden turned over.

Borromäus. Surely, sir, it's quite necessary. We may have a frost any night now. I'm not lettin' these mild nights deceive me, once it's October. Do you remember the Autumn of '93, sir? We sat outdoors that evening — the 28th of October it was, and next morning at three there was a heavy frost. And in '87 and '88 it was the same way. No, sir, I'm not lettin' these fine days deceive me.

Hausdorfer. Quite right, Borromäus. *(He looks on at the work.)* And what shall we plant here now? *(He falls into deep thought and pays little heed to the answer.)*

Borromäus. Just what I wanted to talk to you about, sir.
I went over to see Franz today —

Hausdorfer (absently). Who?

Borromäus (surprised). Why, Franz, sir, — Baron Weiseneck's gardener across the way. He 'thinks a bit of himself but he knows a bit, too. He's studied it all in books, twenty or more of them he has on his shelf, so I don't mind askin' him a question now and then —

Hausdorfer (he has not been listening). Yes, yes, — you ought to do that —

Borromäus. Do what, sir?

Hausdorfer. Whatever he told you. I'm quite willing you should.

Borromäus. (still more surprised). But, sir, I haven't said anything yet —

Hausdorfer (as before). It will be the right thing to do', no doubt.

Borromäus (now quite alarmed). Why, sir —

Hausdorfer (as if awakening). What is it?

Borromäus. Oh, sir, I understand — if I may take the liberty of asking, sir — I'm sure it's that Mrs. Councillor is worse again. *(HAUSDORFER does not answer, BORROMÄUS becomes embarrassed.)* I thought maybe, sir, since it's over three weeks that the lady was out here the last time —

Hausdorfer. She is dead — I thank you for your sympathy —
Mrs. Councillor is dead. *(He sits down by the table.)*

Borromäus (startled, pulls off his cap hastily). Oh — sir —

(There is a pause.)

Hausdorfer. Yes. She will never come out here again to see us.

Borromäus. Is it possible, sir! I didn't think the lady was as ill as that. *(Shakes his head.)* And quite a young lady one might almost say.

Hausdorfer. Young, Borromäus? Well, she *was* seven years younger than I. But then I'm nearly sixty.

Borromäus. Yes, that's true, sir.

Hausdorfer. Still, people do live longer than that.

Borromäus. You see, sir, it's because I saw Mrs. Councillor so often, almost every day it seems like now, in these fifteen or twenty years — *Hausdorfer.* Yes, we were all younger twenty years ago.

Borromäus. But even this last year, sir, she didn't look like an old lady. And this summer, when she grew so pale and thin — anyone would have thought — why, one evening, sir, when
I went past the gate late and saw her sitting here, I really thought — beggin' your pardon, sir, I thought it must be Mrs.
Councillor's younger sister.

Hausdorfer (after a short pause). Well, Borromäus, and what did our arrogant friend Franz have to say?

Borromäus. Oh, no, sir, I won't bother you with such things now. *(Kisses his hand.)* I know what it means, sir, I had a wife once and — buried her. *(He is suddenly frightened at what he has said.)* That is — I meant, sir —

Hausdorfer. I understand, Borromäus. *(There is another pause.)*

Borromäus. And the young gentleman, sir?

Hausdorfer. Who?

Borromäus. Young Mr. Heinrich, sir. Oh, dear, it's too dreadful! When I think how he used to bring his mother out here all this last year, and then come for her again in the evening —

Hausdorfer. Yes, he's greatly to be pitied.

Borromäus. Is he ill himself, sir, that he doesn't come out here?

Hausdorfer. No, no, I expect him any day. He has been away, traveling. But he should return any day now. He had to rest a little — to brighten himself up — he has to work again.

Borromäus. Yes, sir, when a man has his calling —

Hausdorfer. And such a calling — a poet! *(He rises.)* A poet! Do you know what that means?

Borromäus. Why, yes, sir —

Hausdorfer. No, you don't — you don't know anything about it. We don't know anything about it at all, — we ordinary mortals, who can do nothing but putter about in our gardens —

Borromäus. Oh, sir, but you once had —

Hausdorfer. You mean, I had something else to do once upon a time? But it wasn't any better than what I'm doing now. I sat at a desk in an office, in the city, from eight o'clock until two, sometimes even until three or four.

Borromäus. It must be right hard to sit in one spot for six hours every day. I've often felt sorry for you, sir, in those days, when you couldn't get out here until so late. And when it was
Winter —

Hausdorfer. One has to do something, Borromäus. Another man has my desk now, and if he sticks at it as long as I did he'll get his pension, too, and someone else will fall into his place. It matters so little who sits there, anyone would do.
But a poet — he's a different sort of being from you and me,
Borromäus. When *he* retires it may be a long, long time before anyone comes to fill his place. A poet must take good care of himself, he owes it to the world — you understand that, Borromäus?

Borromäus. Why, yes, sir.

Hausdorfer. No, you don't — you don't understand it at all. Have you noticed anything queer about Heinrich? — anything unusual? Have you never noticed the halo around his head? No? Well, there you see, you don't understand it at all.

(BORROMÄUS laughs, then looks serious.) Don't worry about me, Borromäus. I'm not losing my mind. I don't mean a real halo, only an imaginary one. You couldn't see it — nor could

I — but his mother saw it.

Borromäus. Yes, I know what you mean, sir. You mean the papers say so much about Mr. Heinrich, although he's so young yet — and because people talk about him — and that's it, isn't it? *(He draws his hand around his head as if describing a halo. HEINRICH, dressed in deep mourning, passes back of the fence. He bows and goes on into the house. HAUSDORFER looks after him and BORROMÄUS follows HAUSDORFER'S glance with his eyes.)*

Hausdorfer. Here he comes. *(He remains seated, silent.)*

Borromäus. If you please, sir — I haven't had any chance yet to tell the young gentleman how sorry I am — *(HEINRICH comes out onto the veranda from the house.)*

Hausdorfer. Go and tell him now — tell him you are sorry for him. *(BORROMÄUS goes to meet HEINRICH who comes down the steps into the garden and takes the old man's hand.)*

Heinrich. Thank you, Borromäus — I understand. I thank you. *(BORROMÄUS goes out R. softly, as HEINRICH comes down towards the table. HAUSDORFER rises now, goes a step or two to meet him and takes his hand.)*

Hausdorfer. You've come home again?

Heinrich. Yes, sooner than I thought. It is better at home —

Hausdorfer (nods). You went away — that same evening?

Heinrich. Yes. I went home from the cemetery, packed my bag and left. I couldn't have endured the night in the house.

Hausdorfer. I can understand. Where did you go?

Heinrich. I went to Salzburg first.

Hausdorfer. Indeed?

Heinrich. I've always felt happy there. It's a consoling town —

Hausdorfer. Are there such towns? That would be fortunate.

Heinrich. There are such towns — under certain conditions. I did not go to Salzburg on a mere chance. I had an experience once, seven or eight years ago — tragic, or, at least, painful — you know, Mr. Hausdorfer, one of those affairs — well, I thought I would never get over it. I went away, and I went to Salzburg. And that very afternoon, during a solitary stroll in Hellbrunn, in the charming Rococo garden, I felt my pain lighten. Next morning I awoke strong and well — and could work again.

Hausdorfer. Is it possible?

Heinrich. Of course, I was scarcely twenty then, and it was Springtime — you have to take that into

consideration.

Hausdorfer. Yes — that's true.

Heinrich. But this time I found no comfort — nothing — rather the contrary.

Hausdorfer. Then there are times when Hellbrunn cannot heal? How long did you stay in Salzburg?

Heinrich. I left the next day — left for Munich. I hoped for the quieting influence of the old pictures. I went to the old Pinakothek where my beloved Dürers and Holbeins hang — and there, for the first time in many, many months, I seemed to feel relief. *(There is a pause.)* You don't mind my telling you all this, do you? I feel a real need to talk it all out with you —

Hausdorfer (takes his hand, speaks more kindly than before). Please do —

Heinrich. Thank you. *(He sits down.)* You see, Mr. Hausdorfer, I've — I've felt it deeply — that you and I — during these last years — that we seem to have — to have grown so apart.

Hausdorfer. How do you mean?

Heinrich. I've seen it plainly — that you — that you weren't as fond of me as you were once, — long ago, — when I was a little boy playing on the meadow there.

Hausdorfer. Yes — that was a long time ago, Heinrich. And you must acknowledge that it was you who first — oh, well, it's only natural that you should want to go your own way. It wasn't particularly interesting out here for a young man — you have your own circle of friends. But I have not complained — or have I?

Heinrich. Oh, no. But I wanted you to know how deeply — after this unsuccessful journey, this flight — how deeply I realize that you are nearer to me than anyone else. You will understand. You know how grateful I must be to you. You were so much to my poor mother — you made her last years of life beautiful!

Hausdorfer (with a gesture of protest). Yes — yes — but tell me more about yourself. You went to Munich and you saw the pictures? And they comforted you?

Heinrich. Only as long as I remained in the cool, quiet halls.
When I stepped out into the street again, it was all gone. And then the evenings — the long, lonely evenings!
I tried to work, to think — impossible! Everything seemed dead within me.

(There is a pause. He rises.) How long will this last, I wonder?

Hausdorfer. It must be distressing — when you're used to regular work —

Heinrich. Used to it? I haven't been — for a long time now.
That's just the trouble. I haven't accomplished anything for two or three years. You know —

Hausdorfer. Yes — I know.

Heinrich. It was an absolute impossibility. To see someone you love — your mother, suffering — suffering

like that — and to know that there is no hope — and that she knows it — that was the terrible part of it — this knowledge that I could see shining in her eyes when I sat by her bed evenings, reading to her. *(There is a long pause.)* I have given up the apartment.

Hausdorfer. You have? Well, it would be too large for you alone.

Heinrich. Apart from that — I could never write a line in those rooms again. Night after night I'd still believe that I could hear that moaning from the next room, that moaning that cut deep into my heart, that robbed me Of the power or the desire to work — to live even. Oh, my God — *(Pause.)* Do you know what Dr. Heusser told me the Sunday before her death?

Hausdorfer. What was it?

Heinrich. He said — it might go on — for two or three years more.

Hausdorfer (with a start that is almost of anger). Two or three years more? *(Controlling himself.)* He said it might go on for two or three years more? —

Heinrich. Yes. And it would have been much worse. She wouldn't have been able to leave her room — she couldn't even have had her few hours out here — here in this garden where she's always been so happy. *(He stands looking down at the empty armchair.)*

Hausdorfer. I might have found my way into town occasionally — don't you think?

Heinrich (with a sense of shame). Dear Mr. Hausdorfer, here I am talking about myself all this time — I am young — there may be something of a future for me yet — but you — how much you have lost?

Hausdorfer. Yes, I have lost much.

Heinrich. I know how near my mother was to you. I have always known it — even — then — years ago.

Hausdorfer. Even then —

Heinrich. I was not so very little when he — who was my father — left us.

Hausdorfer. Yes — yes.

Heinrich. I can still remember the day mother told me that my papa had gone away. When he did not return I imagined he must be dead and I used to cry bitterly, some nights. Then one day I met him on the street with — the other woman — for whose sake he had deserted my mother. I hid in a doorway that he might not see me — I felt ashamed, child that I was.
Oh, yes, I early learned to understand that my mother was free — as free as if she had been widowed.

Hausdorfer. Then — it seems — you have forgiven us?

Heinrich (slightly offended), I beg your pardon, I must have expressed myself awkwardly. *(Warmer again.)* Why shouldn't we talk naturally and simply about natural, simple things, particularly in a moment like this. I long to press your hand, as a son to a father, for I know how my mother loved you. *(It is now growing dark.*

The lanterns on the street are lit up one by one.)

Hausdorfer. Love? That would not mean so much. Love comes easily when one is young. We were *friends,* Heinrich, old people and friends. Do you know what that means? Or has the word no meaning yet for such young ears? Ah, yes, how could you understand it? — you young people — with the world opening before you — the future at your feet — and *you,* just you with your gifts, your prospects — no wonder —

Heinrich. Oh, you are mistaken, Mr. Hausdorfer, I do understand it. If I could bring her back to you — to us — could bring back my poor mother and see her sitting there, — if only just for one evening — what would I not give to do it?

Hausdorfer (bitterly). What *would* you give?

Heinrich (hesitating). I feel now as if I would give my entire future, all I can accomplish, all that I hope to achieve — give it all for that.

Hausdorfer. Heinrich, don't be angry — but — you don't believe that yourself.

Heinrich. If I could do it — if it lay in my power —

Hausdorfer. No, Heinrich, that is not true — even if it lay in your power — I know you — I know you all — I know what you are like — you artists — all of you.

Heinrich. All of us? I do not have to answer for anyone else.

Hausdorfer. No, you do not have to answer for anyone else.
But when I say all of you, I know what I mean. There was a man in my office — about ten years ago it was — he occupied himself with music in his leisure hours; something of his was given as a concert by the Choral Society. His name was Franz
Thomas. He lost an only child, a boy of seven, handsome and intelligent. I knew him, he used to come to the office with his mother sometimes. Diphtheria killed him one night, and I went to pay my visit of condolence. He — the father — was at the piano playing — and the dead child lay in his coffin in the very same room. He sat there playing and he didn't stop when I came in — he just nodded to me and whispered, when I came up behind him: "Listen to this, Mr. Hausdorfer — this is in memory of my poor boy — the melody just came to me—" and there lay the dead child in its coffin — yes — it turned me cold —

Heinrich (listens with great interest and finally with a sense of satisfaction). Yes — I think I can understand that many people — many very worthy people, feel a sort of horror at such things.

Hausdorfer. Horror? That is the right word.

Heinrich. But tell me, Mr. Hausdorfer, aren't they to be envied — the people who can escape like that — escape from their sorrows into their work, into their art? — who may even possess the magic power to shape their grief into something beautiful, instead of pouring it out in useless tears?

Hausdorfer. Into something beautiful? Does that bring back the dead?

Heinrich. As little as do the tears. I don't say that our joy in our work can outweigh the grief for a beloved one lost. But isn't it all that is left to us? This work of ours? Will you not tend your garden as carefully as before? And I — I long for the day when I shall be able to work again, to accomplish something worth while. We must all bow to the inevitable.

Hausdorfer. To the *inevitable* — yes, that may be true.

Heinrich. This was inevitable.

Hausdorfer. No — no —

Heinrich (slightly surprised). But it was. Why torture yourself with such thoughts? Didn't you speak to the doctor yourself not more than six weeks ago — he told you the truth then — it had to come.

Hausdorfer. But not so soon — not yet.

Heinrich. How can you say that, Mr. Hausdorfer? You don't mean — that there was any neglect —

Hausdorfer. Oh, no — oh, no, forgive me. Everything was done that could possibly be done.

Heinrich. Well, then?

Hausdorfer. Didn't you tell me yourself, just now, that she might have had two or three years more to live?

Heinrich. Why, yes, that's true. But the doctor warned us that death might come suddenly any day — you know that as well as I do.

Hausdorfer. Suddenly? Yes, it came suddenly enough. *(Hesitating, then with decision.)* But whether it came — naturally — that's another question.

Heinrich (startled). What? Why? — I don't understand how you could suggest such a thing — when there wasn't the slightest — the doctor would surely have noticed —

Hausdorfer. Why should he? An overdose of morphine — death before morning — the family are prepared —

Heinrich. You say that — with such strange conviction — did my mother ever — speak about —?

Hausdorfer. I am not mistaken — let that suffice.

Heinrich. Since you have already said so much, Mr. Hausdorfer, you will understand that I —

Hausdorfer. I know what I am talking about — don't ask any more.

Heinrich. You mean — the letter on her desk —

Hausdorfer (nods). Yes. *(There is a pause.)*

Heinrich (alarmed, doubtful). The letter? Hm — Yet why should I be surprised? How many times in those

terrible nights have I asked myself — I will confess it now, even at the risk of giving you the horrors — I have asked myself why we poor mortals should suffer so much misery — such agony, when it is in our power to end it all any moment.

Hausdorfer. Heinrich!

Heinrich. If my mother has done — what you say she has — then she has done right.

Hausdorfer. Heinrich!

Heinrich. That is my honest opinion.

Hausdorfer. But you don't know; Heinrich — you don't know the truth. She would have lived on — even in torture — as long as God gave her life — she would have lived on for my sake and for her own — for our few hours in the garden here — so full of memories of our youth, and our happiness. She died for your sake, Heinrich — now you know, — she died for you.

Heinrich (in growing excitement). For me —? For me? I don't understand you at all — for me? What do you mean?

Hausdorfer. Can't you really understand? Can't you imagine? Didn't you speak of it yourself, just now?

Heinrich. Speak of what?

Hausdorfer. Haven't you just told me what has been going on in you this last year? And do you think your mother wouldn't notice it?

Heinrich. Notice what?

Hausdorfer. That her illness hampered you in your work? — that you couldn't write — that you were afraid your talent was dead — that you — *you* — were the martyr, that you were a ruined man — she saw all that — and *because* she saw it —

Heinrich. Because of that? Oh, no, no — it isn't possible.

Hausdorfer. She was your mother — it was quite possible.

Heinrich. Oh, no, no. Mr. Hausdorfer, your grief leads you into surmises that are quite unjustified. Of course I realize that my state of mind cannot have been a secret to my mother — although I did my best to hide it from her. But that this should have been the reason for — oh, no — no.

Hausdorfer (interrupting vehemently). Why won't you believe me? Do you think I am lying to you? Why should I?

(He takes a letter from his pocket.) Here, read this — read this — this letter was written with full consciousness — it's the letter that was found on her desk. She wrote it that last evening — and half an hour later — read it — read it — it's all there — because she saw you suffer — *she* saw *you* — suffer — she — left us — before her time had come — that's why — she died.

Heinrich (reads the letter quickly). Mother! mother! *(He sinks down as if crushed.)* For me — for my sake — why then — then I am her — oh, my God — Mother! *(He kneels before the armchair, burying his head in its seat.* HAUSDORFER *looks down at him and nods slowly. There is a long pause. Finally*,

HEINRICH *rises and speaks quietly*.)

Heinrich. I will go now. I can imagine how painful it is for you to see me here. This letter — *(He still holds it in his hand)* — it is written in full consciousness and it tells the truth. I cannot doubt it. *(After a moment's hesitation.)* But may I — may I call your attention to one sentence?

Hausdorfer. Which?

Heinrich. This one, in which my mother implores you never to betray the contents of this letter to me. *(Reading.)* "I implore you—" She implores you to leave me in the belief that she died a natural death. This letter was intended for you alone and certainly not for me.

Hausdorfer. But I intend that you shall know of it. I take the responsibility. You will survive it.

Heinrich. Your action has destroyed the very reason for her voluntary death, for her great sacrifice. *She* did not will that I should feel myself her murderer, that I should go through life as one accursed. And some day you may come to realize that you have done a great wrong, not only to me but to her — a wrong as great as mine has been.

Hausdorfer. I will take it upon myself, Heinrich — I can tell you — *you.* You will not feel guilty long — you will live on — you will work — you will shape it into something beautiful.

Heinrich. That is my right — it is even my duty now. There is nothing for me now but to kill myself, or to give the proof that my mother — has not died in vain.

Hausdorfer. Heinrich! Your mother was alive less than a month ago and you can talk like this? She killed herself for your sake — and you can shake it off? A few days more and you'll be thinking, perhaps, that what she did was only her duty. Am I not right? You are all alike, you artists — great and small — all alike — proud, arrogant! What is all your writing — even if you were the greatest genius — what is all your writing compared to one such living hour? — one of those hours when your mother sat here in this armchair and talked to us — or just sat silent — but she was here — and she was alive — she was alive — alive I —

Heinrich. Living hours? They live no longer than the life of him who remembers them. And it is no mean vocation to give such hours an enduring existence beyond the grave. Good-bye, Mr. Hausdorfer. Today your grief gives you the right to misunderstand me. In the Spring, when your garden blooms anew, we will meet again. For you, too, — will go on living.

(He goes out through the veranda. As he opens the door of the house a broad stream of light from the lamp shines out into the now darkened garden.)

CURTAIN

PART II. THE LADY WITH THE DAGGER

A DRAMA

CHARACTERS

REMIGIO



PAULINE *(Paola)*

LEONHARD *(Lionardo)*

THE LADY WITH THE DAGGER



A small room in a picture gallery, hung with works of the Italian Renaissance. On the center wall, in a conspicuous position, is a large picture of a beautiful woman in a flowing gown, somewhat in the style of Palma Vecchio.
She holds a dagger in her upraised right hand and stares at the ground at her feet, as if someone lay there whom she had murdered. The only furniture on the stage is a bench in the center of the room. Silence broods over the scene. An attendant passes slowly across the stage. When he has gone, PAULINE *comes in from the Left, holding a catalogue. She saunters through the room, stops to look at a picture on the Right wall. She wears a handsome street dress with rich furs. A few seconds later.*

LEONHARD *comes in from the opposite side. He is a good-looking young man, wearing a long overcoat of the latest cut. He stops behind* PAULINE.

Leonhard. Good morning —

Pauline (turns to him, smiling). Good morning. I have just arrived. Room 9, that would be right, wouldn't it?

Leonhard. How do you mean?

Pauline. It was room 8 in which we parted last time.

Leonhard. Quite right. I didn't know you were so particular about the pictures. I scarcely dared hope you would come today.

Pauline. You had my promise.

Leonhard. Last night's affair was a late one?

Pauline. Until morning almost. Too bad you had to leave so early. It was a delightful affair.

Leonhard. They certainly lionized him.

Pauline. Did that distress you?

Leonhard. The whole world may kneel at his feet for all
I care. But you, Pauline, you loved him more than ever last night — you were proud of him.

Pauline. Had I not cause? Do you not admire him yourself? You were shaken to your inmost soul — you applauded as madly as any of them when the curtain fell on the last act.

Leonhard. You noticed that?

Pauline. I looked down at you often enough. *(He kisses her hand, she draws it gently away.)* Didn't you want to show me a picture which you think so like me?

Leonhard. Quite right. Here it is — this large one.

Pauline (walks over to the picture of the Lady with the Dagger). This one? Yes — it has something of me.

Leonhard. The resemblance is remarkable — apart from the dagger naturally.

Pauline (smiling). Why "naturally"? You never can tell.

(Looking in her catalogue.) Number 726 — Lady with Dagger — unknown artist, died about 1530 —

Leonhard. Those are your eyes.

Pauline. Are? — they might be. Let us stay here a while. I feel at home in this room.

Leonhard. Pauline —

Pauline. Not altogether on your account. In there, where the old Dutch and German masters hang, I was not so happy. But I have a sort of feeling of being at home here. I really believe I must have seen all these people somewhere. Look at that old gentleman. *(She points to a picture on the right wall.)* He certainly looks as if he knew me. It would not surprise me in the least if he were to bow to me.

Leonhard. He may have been a guest at your house in the early days of the 16th century.

Pauline. Why not? My mother's people came from Florence. They wore prettier clothes then than now, don't you think? But this is not intended for a slur on your new overcoat, which is really vastly becoming.
(LEONHARD bows.)
Still — I will not deny —

Leonhard. Deny what?

Pauline (smiling). That if I had met you in a costume like any of these —

Leonhard. It is my misfortune that I did not have the honor of knowing you in those days.

Pauline. Are you sure you did not? We may have forgotten it, perhaps.

Leonhard. I assure you I could not have forgotten — you —

Pauline (pondering). Perhaps — if we exert our will power — *(There is a pause, as her eyes wander from one picture to another.)*

Leonhard. Your husband's name is on every tongue today.

Pauline (coming back to the present). Yes, I can imagine it.

Leonhard (with meaning). And yours also.

Pauline. Naturally. *(She turns as if to go.)*

Leonhard. Pauline!-Pauline (she turns to him somewhat absently). Well, what is it?

Leonhard. Pauline — how can you endure it? *(She looks at him with a peculiar smile).* Everyone in the theatre knew the history of that play. It was simply the story —

Pauline (interrupts quickly). Of Princess Marie.

Leonhard. That was what they called it.

Pauline. And who gives you the right to imagine that it was anything else?

Leonhard. I imagine only what the whole town knows — but I know more.

Pauline. And that is? —

Leonhard. I know that there was a moment last evening when you hated him.

Pauline. Hated whom?

Leonhard. The man for whom you and your fate mean nothing more than an opportunity to show his wit — his genius if you will.

Pauline. My whole life may have no other meaning —

Leonhard (simply, without pathos). And is that part of your life's meaning that its secrets should be bared to the mob? Princess Marie? Everyone knew that it was Princess Marie up there in the box. Master Gottfried? Everyone knew that it was he who had written the play. And all the words and all the kisses on the stage — his treachery and her despair — his remorse and her forgiveness — all the passion and all the misery — it was all true — and Master Gottfried had made it into a play, and Princess Marie sat in her box and looked on as it was played. Oh, Pauline, I felt yesterday as if I must go to you — and free you — as if I must carry you away with me — you seemed so like a slave — a helpless, humiliated slave. I pitied you — and I was ashamed.

Pauline. Ashamed? Why?

Leonhard. Because I love you, Pauline. *(She looks at him calmly.)* Do not be angry with me, Pauline. I know I have no right to speak thus to you — no right except that nothing else in all the world matters to me — nothing but you — and that I'm ready to die for you — and that I am young.

Pauline. That means more than a little. But let us drop the subject and move on. Come, let us see what is in the next room. No — no more of that, I beg you.

Leonhard (imploringly). Then tell me, Pauline, why are you here today? Why did you come yesterday and last week?
And why, as we sat here quietly together and your knee touched mine, why did you tremble? Why do your eyes grow moist when I speak to you, and your lips pout with longing, even while we stand here so calmly?

Pauline. Why question me so vehemently, Leonhard? I deny nothing — denials are vulgar and cowardly. But

it would be the worst of all lies if I were to tell you that I love you.
There has never been a moment when I believed it myself. But there was a moment when I was ready to become your mistress. You let that moment pass and it will not return — you will never guess when it was even. Yes — that is life. It is no disgrace for me and no particular honor for you. It has happened many million times before. But most women in my position would say, “I will give you the love of a sister, a friend — ask for no other.” I, Leonhard, I say to you that I have for you about every feeling you could wish me to have except friendship — no, I do not feel that. *(She stops suddenly.)* Haven’t I said that to you — once before?

Leonhard (passionately). No — you have never spoken to me like this.

Pauline (dreamily). Strange — I seemed to think so.

Leonhard. Why did you stop so suddenly?

Pauline (dazed). What is the matter with me? Where am
I? I stopped — *(As if slowly awakening.)* Well — I stopped because I had nothing more to say. Good-bye.

Leonhard (hurt). What does that mean?

Pauline. It means that we have met for the last time.

Leonhard. The last?

Pauline. Yes. I leave for Italy tomorrow morning with my husband.

Leonhard. And when do you return?

Pauline. I do not know — never for you.

Leonhard. Pauline — you are joking — we never imagined that.

Pauline. How could we? I did not know it myself until this morning.

Leonhard. Then what has happened? Tell me — why —?

Pauline. Why? Simply because I do not care to imperil my peace of mind, my life’s happiness, my life itself, perhaps, for — what is it they call it?— “one short hour of bliss—”

Leonhard. And your husband? What does he think of this sudden decision?

Pauline. My husband? I asked him to take me away.

Leonhard. What excuse did you give?

Pauline. None. I told him the truth as I always do.

Leonhard. Always?

Pauline. I promised him — on the very first day — that I would confess every emotion of my heart to him — he promised the same.

Leonhard. And this morning?

Pauline. I told him that I am in danger.

Leonhard. And what did he say?

Pauline. I told you. We leave tomorrow morning.

Leonhard. Pauline! Do you think he will ever forgive you?

Pauline. Why not? I have forgiven him more.

Leonhard. He is a man and we men are all vain. He is a poet and therefore a thousand times vainer than other men. He will make you repent it all the rest of your life.

Pauline. I must endure it.

Leonhard. He will torture you as cruelly as if you had really sinned.

Pauline. Had I sinned he would kill me.

Leonhard. Nonsense. He would make a new play of it and be grateful to you at the last.

Pauline. Possibly. He is the man to combine the two.

Leonhard. When do you start?

Pauline. Tomorrow morning, as I told you.

Leonhard. Tomorrow? Then today is still ours.

Pauline. Are you mad?

Leonhard. I shall expect you this evening, Pauline.

Pauline. You are quite mad.

Leonhard. I was never so sane as in this moment.

Pauline. But, Leonhard — now that he knows so much —

Leonhard. I would die a thousand deaths for you, Pauline.

(He takes her hand.)

Pauline. No. No. Good-bye — this is utter nonsense — I do not love you — Good-bye —

Leonhard. Pauline! *(A loud, deep bell, like a church bell, begins slowly to toll the noon hour.)*

Pauline. Let me go. I must get home — listen — it is twelve o'clock. He knows that I am here to say good-bye to you — if I should dare to go out this evening —

Leonhard. Well?

Pauline. It would go hard with both of us.

Leonhard. I will wait for you, Pauline — *(They stand before the picture of The Lady with the Dagger. The bell tolls slowly.)*

Pauline (looking more closely at the picture). Who lies here in the shadow?

Leonhard. Where?

Pauline. Can't you see?

Leonhard. I can't see anything.

Pauline. It is you!

Leonhard. I? What a queer idea!

Pauline. And all these others —? *(She looks around the room, then back at the picture.)* Who painted it?

Leonhard. We just read it — unknown artist. About 1530.

Pauline. Unknown —?

Leonhard. Pauline, what is the matter?

Pauline. It is I, myself — do you not recognize me?

Leonhard. Why, yes. I said the resemblance was remarkable.

Pauline. It is I — my very self. Do you not recognize me?
And here — in the black shadow — the dead youth — it is you.

Leonhard. Pauline — what is the matter?

Pauline. Do you not remember, Leonhard? *(She takes his hand. They sit down slowly on the divan with their faces turned toward the picture.)*

Leonhard. Remember?

Pauline. Lionardo, dost thou remember?

(The stage is plunged in sudden darkness. The bell is heard tolling slowly until it grows light again. Then it stops suddenly. During the moment of darkness the scene has changed to REMIGIO'S *studio, in the gray of early morning. It is a large, highceilinged room with a huge Gothic window at the back. To the left is a small door; to the right, a heavy dark red portière covers the entrance to an inner room. There are pictures on the*

wall appropriate for the epoch, copies of antique statues about the room, an easel near the front, to the right, bears a large picture which is veiled. Furnishing and decoration of the sixteenth century. LIONARDO *(Leonhard) lies on the floor near the portiere, but he is not asleep. There is silence in the room for a moment, until* PAOLA *(Pauline) comes in from behind the portiere. She wears a loose white robe, her hair hanging free. She is now exactly like the picture of the first scene. She passes* LIONARDO *without seeing him, goes slowly to the easel and raises the veil gently from the picture. It is the picture of the first scene, but still incomplete, for the raised arm holding the dagger is missing. The picture cannot be seen distinctly until the stage grows lighter.* PAOLA *stands looking at it long and silently.* LIONARDO *rolls over to where she is standing and kisses the hem of her garment.)*

Paola (starts slightly). Are you still here? Have you not left the house?

Lionardo. No, love, I lingered here before your door.

Paola. Then hurry now.

Lionardo.
While still the fragrance of your kisses clings
About my hair? I grudge the balmy wind
Of jealous night the power to bear it off.

Paola.
'Twas little wise: some servant might awake
And mark your going. See, the dawn is gray.

Lionardo (he rises).
Then, Paola, I'll wait day's coming here,
And catch the light's first glow upon my work.

Paola.
Ah, spare your toil! Why do you strive in vain?
Yes, if you were young Bassano's pupil,
Franco's or Andrea Galbi's even —
I then, perhaps, could understand your zeal.
But here where genius blazes on the walls
How do you dare to ply the futile brush?
How comes it that you do not each new morn
Destroy the labor of the day before,
And sink in humbleness upon the ground,
Where treads the Mighty and Unequalled One?

Lionardo.
I know I am a dauber, Paola
Not worthy with the master here to work.
And many a morning stole so sluggishly

Out of night's clouds, when I would fain
Have ended all my useless life at once.
But this day, this! It is another dawn.
And not for all the master's genius, fame,
Would I exchange the mem'ry of this night,
When you, his wife, I held within my arms.
And ask Remigio if, were he to choose,
Which he would choose.

Paola (gravely).
None has the choice: not he, nor I, nor you.
It comes to us —

Lionardo. And comes to each of us as he deserves.

Paola (absently). Think you?

Lionardo.
For he sees naught in you of what you are,
While I see more than you can see yourself.
Fulfillment of all beauty — of my dream —
Glows through your body, and from out your eyes
Gleams back the meaning of life's hidden deeps.
For him your whole existence is naught else
Than his art's spur: for when his trait'rous kiss
Calls up the glow of love upon your face
'Tis but to paint a picture in its guise.
And trust me, when this last completed is,
That still imperfect waits your lord's return,
Then dies his love for you —

Paola.
I know it! I myself am nothing more:
Am all exhausted: and the thing I was
Now pulses in this picture —
(She stands before the picture.)
It is a riddle here for me to solve.
I look at mine own face and know it, yet
I know it not. I ne'er looked so and yet
I might look so. Some fate that is before me
Might cast a shadow on me like to this
Better or worse than all the past can show —
Than all I ever thought or felt or was —
Some possibility with half-closed lids

Lies here for life athirst. Would he but come!
Whence this fierce longing? Is it from my heart?
Or from that woman's on the easel there?
Thou art long away — too long, Remigio —
A year is endless.

Lionardo.
You dream, my Paola! Hardly one month
Has he been gone.

Paola (with passion).
Longing counts not the hours. But he will come
Today! Ah, yes! Today at last he'll come.

Lionardo.
Again you err. For if, as first was planned,
He yesterday from Florence took to horse
He cannot come until tomorrow noon.

Paola.
No, he comes today.

Lionardo. Impossible! *(With a touch of scorn.)*
For not on longing's wings
The Master comes, but on an earthly steed
And subject unto earth's compelling laws
Of sleep and food as other mortals are,
Thus must he come.

Paola.
Not till tomorrow? Why may I not crush
The empty hours like nuts within my palm!
One whole long day! A day that just now dawns!
Ah, I would give and gladly, what of life
Remains to me, could he come now, at once.

Lionardo.
Paola!

Paola (indifferently). Yes?

Lionardo (with passion), Paola, look at me! *(He takes her hand and holds it.)*

Paola (she leaves her hand in his, but does not turn to him).
And why? I know thee well enough: thou art
Young Lionardo — yes — I know.

Art pigment-mixer? No? Thou art not? What then?

A page at Court? Or e'en a prince, perhaps?
Forgive! Not pigment-mixer, prince nor page,
Thou art a painter, Lionardo called,
And thou art fair, I know. Why asketh thou
That I should look at thee? With fast-closed eyes
I'll tell thee more, I'll tell thee all thou wilt.
Thy hair is brown and soft and lightly curled:
Thine eyes are blue and dark the brows above,
Thy throat is slim and white as any maid's,
Thy limbs are willow-slender, strong thine arm.
Well, is't not enough? Must I still see thee?
Drop thou my hand! *(She draws away her hand.)*

Lionardo. Paola, wilt play with me?

Paola (she has no eyes for him).
From Florence will he bring new orders home?
If so, then next time I will go with him.
Think, Lionardo, not since girlhood passed
Have I in Florence been, seen Cosmo's glory —
Nor met my brothers since. But 'tis not that
That plagues me so. The ladies of the court
Of Medici o'er-full of passion are
And over-gallant: when an artist comes
Like him with name and fame from distant parts,
They'll wait all night, 'tis said, before his door
Until their turn shall come.

Lionardo. What is't to you with whom Remigio sleeps?

Paola (with a quick glance).
True, Lionardo! To live the waking hours together,
That alone has meaning! Yet, 'tis true
Experience teaches that some nightly revel
Though insignificant it seems, will oft
Obtrude itself into the day's bright light
And plume and pride itself, as it had life.

Lionardo. Paola, yesternight thou were't —

Paola. Thine, thou wilt say?
Dare but to speak it now the dawn is come!
Did'st hear me murmur as the others do

“I’ve waited for thee — thee alone I love?”
There came no other sound from out these lips
But only stifled cries of wanton lust.
It is no more and therefore never was.

Lionardo.
No, Paola, it was and therefore is,
And always will be as my right to thee.

Paola.
Thy right? Thy right to me? Dost thou not see
That all its semblance faded with the stars?
And that thou hast no more of right to me
For all thy youth and beauty, courage, strength,
Than if thou were’t hideous, lame, or old and senile.

Leonardo.
Paola! tell me that these cruel words
Are but to prove me! Enough, have pity!

Paola. Be still. The morning came.

Lionardo. The night will come again.

Paola. Never for us! Away! Keep to thy place!

Lionardo (on his knees before her). This is my place — or else it is the grave.

Paola. Be careful not to touch me.

Lionardo.
How hard and cold and threatening those eyes,
That promised and fulfilled so much of love
For me this night.

Paola.
Enough, enough. Stand up, I tell thee now,
Or I will treat thee as I saw Remigio
Treat that bold girl, red Perugrina,
Who came as you do loudly clamoring
And kneeling in the dust and crying out
“I love thee so,” and “Ah, I love thee so,”
And “Thou hast kissed me, dost remember it?”
And “’Twas this night,” and “Ah, and woe is me!”

Lionardo. What did Remigio?

Paola. He chased the shameless huzzy from his door. *(There is a long pause.)*

Lionardo (rises slowly, speaks in quite another tone).
No, I am not like Perugrina, no!
For were this woman I, or like to me,
Then she had done what I shall surely do.
Farewell.

Paola. Would'st kill thyself? Well, I am worth it!

Lionardo.
Thou art, my Paola, and therefore I must do it —
With thine own dagger here before thy door.
Then all will think, as will Remigio,
That unrequited love has goaded me.
Yes, I will do it: and for mine own sake,
For shame burns deep — and yet beyond all this
I die for you as well — for your own sake.

Paola. For me?

Lionardo.
To free you from the grip of fear,
Lest any word or look of mine
Betray you or reveal your guilt.

Paola. What say'st thou? Fear? What think'st thou that I fear?

Lionardo.
What many a wife ere now has dreaded
From him whom she deceived. Breathe free again,
The steel shall reach the heart of all thy care.

Paola.
Stay, Lionardo! Dar'st thou to say,
My cowardice does drive thee to thy death?

Lionardo.
Thou art no coward, Paola, but thou would'st live —
That is the courage of the guilty heart.

Paola.
Courage is to confess the guilt.
Stay here!

Lionardo. Paola — *(Hoof-beats in the court below. They both stop and listen.)*

Paola. Hark! Dost hear it?

Lionardo. ’Tis he.

Paola. Then his longing was
Stronger than earthly law. He’s come, he’s come.

(She hastens to the window.) He is dismounting. Come — for
I am ready.

Lionardo. What would you do?

Paola. I said it.

Lionardo.
No, Paola, no. I do beseech you.
Not this wild thought! believe me that you trust
Too strongly in his greatness.

Paola. His smiling eye seeks mine. *(She waves her scarf from the window.)*
Welcome, Remigio.
Alas, I fear thou’lt smile no more today.

Lionardo.
If conscience drive you to confessing all
Then put the blame on me alone: tell him
I hid a potion in your wine: nay, more —
Threatened your life unless you yielded to me —
But spare him knowledge of your fault. His pride
Is dearer to him than his wife. And that
He threw in laughing words — in idle jest —
Across the table at the Prince’s feast —
I heard it well, I sat across from you
And as he mocking spoke your eyes sought mine.

Paola. You still remember?

Lionardo.
He’ll keep it, I assure you, Paola —
His laughing vow to bury his white teeth
As would a hungry beast, in your soft throat.
I beg you, Paola — I beseech you —
His step is on the stair — if once the words
Escape your lips then there is only death.
Forget my hasty speech, forgive me, love —
Ne’er shall my hated self your eyes offend.

I leave this city e'er the evening falls.
I was a shadow only on the wall
And as a shadow will I fade away.
Mine you are not, and neither are you his:
Life only has the perfect right to you,
Do not refuse it! It were sin to light
And spring time if you die. Live, Paola!
For you are much too fair — too glorious
To die. You leave behind you here too much
That's worth the living for. The door without
Turns gently on the hinge — I know you're brave
Be gracious and forgive me — then I swear
That in an hour's time I'll be no more!
His hand is on the latch — ah! — Paola!

(REMIGIO comes in, smiling and happy.)

Paola (draws back from him).
Take care that you embrace me not too soon —
This man here was my lover yesternight.

(There is a long pause.)

Remigio. Go, Lionardo!

Lionardo.
Remigio, kill me!
I'll take no mercy at your hands.

Remigio.
It is not mercy bids thee go from here
Nor is it anger that would bar the way.
There is no thought within my heart of thee:
I do not need thee, so I bid thee go!

Lionardo. Remigio, I beseech you, kill me!

Remigio.
He kills who hates, and he who loves can kill.
Indifference has no weapon. Should I break
The humble glass that the forbidden draught
Was quaffed from by a reckless, wayward child?
Because thou hast the gift of conscious life
Makes thee no more to me than what thou art,
The miserable instrument of chance.

Lionardo. I begged for death, but I demand it now!

Remigio. Thy wish moves me as little as thy prayer.

Lionardo. I'll force you to do it.

Remigio. No man has forced me yet.

Lionardo.
I'll stand out in the market-place and cry
That Paola, your wife, was mine this night.

Remigio. They'll know an hour earlier, that's all.

Lionardo.
I'll call you rogue before the court! I'll scorn you
As coward playing the magnanimous.
I'll swear your wife pursued me till I fell.

Remigio. '*T*will help thee little thus to slur the dead.

Lionardo.
Once more, Remigio, I pray you, strike!
Ere you have let the one right moment pass.
For new desire of life within me moves,
I have more work to do before I die.
I hate you more than e'er before a man
Did hate another: always hated you,
But knew it only now since the hot shower
Of poisoned scorn you pour upon my head.
I hate you so that I must live to kill you,
And yet the more that not a thousand deaths
From my poor hand could really take your life.
For in your work you'll live for all the world:
In your wife's longing you will live for her:
For me, stronger than death, in my wild hate.
And yet I'll kill you, for the uselessness
Whips up my lagging will with scorpion thrusts.
Let me not go, Remigio, for as sure
As if a thousand swords were bared for you,
You're lost, when I through yonder door shall pass.

Remigio (goes to the door and opens it). The door is open, you may go your way. *(He turns back again, LIONARDO goes to the door.)*

Paola. Let him not go! He'll surely hold his vow —

Lionardo (turning at door). While I have life!

Paola. While you have life! *(She runs to him and buries her dagger in his throat.* LIONARDO *sinks dying at her feet.*

PAOLA *stands over him with a dagger in her upraised hand, now exactly like the picture in the first scene. She remains thus motionless, until the end of this scene.)*

Remigio. Paola! *(He stares at her long and intently. Slowly a change comes over his face. He grows calmer, almost bright.)*
Was that the answer? Is my prayer fulfilled?
That light might come for this great work of mine?
This *is* the answer! I will finish it —
Ah, gracious Heaven, that brought this thing to me,
Grant me one hour of calm within my soul,
And power for my hand to work my will.

(He goes to the door and locks it, then comes down to his easel. PAOLA *remains in her position until a sudden darkness jails upon the stage and the bell begins to toll as before. In a few moments the little gallery room is revealed, and the bell stops when the stage is light again. Altogether it has struck just twelve times.* PAULINE *and* LEONHARD *are seated on the divan with their faces turned toward the picture on the center wall.)*

Pauline. Dost thou remember —

Leonhard. Pauline! Where are you? Are you dreaming?

Pauline (as if in a dream). It comes again? All that we once have lived? Lionardo — must it be?

Leonhard. Pauline — what is it?

Pauline (as if awakening). Leonhard! *(She looks around.)*

Leonhard. You seemed to have lost yourself for a moment.

Pauline. Only a moment?

Leonhard. Were you dreaming?

Pauline. Was I? *(She looks at him long and intently.)* If you do not *know* then you can never understand. Good-bye.

(She rises and turns away from him.)

Leonhard. Pauline! Is this really — good-bye?

Pauline. Forever.

Leonhard. And this evening?

Pauline. This evening? This evening — *(Into her eyes there comes an expression as if some fate were hanging over her from which she cannot escape. She takes his hand, looks him gravely in the eyes and speaks, in a tone that expresses decision rather than love.)* I will come — *(She turns and goes out quickly.)*

CURTAIN

PART III. LAST MASKS

A DRAMA

CHARACTERS

KARL RADEMACHER, JOURNALIST

FLORIAN JACKWERTH, actor

ALEXANDER WEIHGAST

DR. HALMSCHLAEGER, Assistant Doctor in the Vienna Public Hospital

DR. TANN, Assistant Doctor in the Vienna Public Hospital

JULIANA PASCHANDA, hospital nurse

LAST MASKS



In the Public Hospital, Vienna. Small room, separated by linen curtains from a public ward. To the left is a small white bed, beside it a large armchair. There is a large table in the center of the room on which are bottles, papers, records, etc. Two plain chairs stand to right and left of the table, a candle is burning on the table. There is no other furniture. The only entrance is through the curtains at back.

KARL RADEMACHER, *past fifty, terribly emaciated and very gray, is in the armchair by the bed, leaning back with eyes closed.*

JULIANA PASCHANDA, *the nurse, is at the table writing. She is stout, good-natured, of indefinite age.*

FLORIAN JACKWERTH *raises the flap of the curtain and comes in.* FLORIAN *is twenty-eight, thin, smooth-shaven, with eyes shining in fever. He wears a loose linen gown, which he drapes about himself in impressive folds. When he raises the curtain the main room beyond can be seen, dimly lighted by a hanging lamp.*

Florian. Always busy, Miss Paschanda?

Nurse. Are you up again? What will the doctor say? Go back to your bed and go to sleep.

Florian. Surely. I shall even take a long, long sleep. May I not help you, fair lady? That is — of course, I don't mean in the matter of sleeping! *(The NURSE pays no attention to him. He creeps on tiptoe to RADEMACHER'S chair, whispers.)* Miss Paschanda — look here — please look here —

Nurse. What is it?

Florian (coming back to her). On my soul — I thought the man was dead.

Nurse. He'll last for a while yet.

Florian. Think so? Well, good-night then, Miss Juliana Paschanda.

Nurse. I'm not Miss, I'm married.

Florian. Oh, I beg your pardon. Haven't had the honor of meeting your husband yet.

Nurse. I hope for your sake you won't. He's an attendant in the Morgue.

Florian. No, thanks — no use for that just at present. *(Confidentially.)* Say, Mrs. Paschanda, did you see the young lady who honored me with a visit this afternoon?

Nurse. The young lady with the red hat?

Florian (offended). Red hat — red hat — yes, she's a fellow player. We were engaged together last season in Olmütz — she was leading lady — yours truly, leading juvenile. Take one look at me — I need say no more. Yes — I wrote her a postal card, just an ordinary postal card, and she came at once. There *is* such a thing as fidelity, even on the stage! And she promised to look around, to speak to the agents about a summer engagement for me, when I'm let out of this place. So you see the young lady has a good heart, even if she does wear a red hat, Mrs. Paschanda. *(He coughs.)* She might come again. I'll write her to wear a blue hat next time, since you don't like red, Mrs. Paschanda. *(He goes off into a bad fit of coughing.)*

Nurse. Hush — the patients are asleep. *(Listens as if she heard something outside.)*

Florian. What is it?

Nurse. I thought I heard the doctor. *(The hospital clock strikes the hour.)*

Florian. What time is it?

Nurse. Nine o'clock.

Florian. Who makes the rounds tonight?

Nurse. Dr. Halmschlaeger.

Florian. Oh, Dr. Halmschlaeger. Nice man, but just a little conceited. *(He sees that RADEMACHER is awake.)* Your servant, Mr. Rademacher. *(The latter nods. FLORIAN continues, imitating DR. HALMSCHLAEGER.)* Well, my dear Rademacher, how are we today? *(Pretends to take off his overcoat and hand it to the NURSE.)* Mrs. Paschanda, will you be so kind?
Thank you.

Nurse (laughing in spite of herself.) How you can imitate people.

Florian (in quite another tone novo, turns as if going from one bed to another). Nothing new today? Nothing new? Nothing new? Good — very good. Good — good.

Nurse. Why — why, that's the head doctor! If he could see you now —!

Florian. Oh, that's nothing, now watch. *(He lets himself fall into a chair, his face distorted as if in mortal pain, his eyes rolling up.)*

Nurse. For mercy's sake, that's —

Florian (interrupting his trick for a moment). Well?
Guess —?

Nurse. The man in bed 17 — the roofer, who died yesterday. Oh, do stop it — it's a sin.

Florian. My dear Mrs. Paschanda, do you think I'm wasting my time in this hospital? There's a great deal to be learned here.

Nurse. Here's the doctor. *(She goes out through the curtain. HALMSCHLAEGER and TANN can be seen further down the large room.)*

Florian. Yes, Mr. Rademacher, I'm making interesting studies here.

Rademacher. Are you?

Florian. It pays an actor to be in a hospital for a while. You think I can't use what I see here because I'm a comedian? Wrong. All wrong. It's a discovery of my own, Mr. Rademacher. *(Important.)* True dramatic intuition can reconstruct the comic mask from the saddest face, even from the face distorted in pain. When I see a man die I know just how he looked when he laughed at a good joke — but what's the matter, Mr. Rademacher? Oh, come now, man — courage — courage! — don't lose your sense of humor, whatever you do. Look at me now. Not a week ago I was done for — not only in the doctor's opinion, that wouldn't have mattered much, — but in my own mind. And now, I'm as cheery as can be — and in a week more — ta ta! Farewell, ye quiet halls! And herewith I take the liberty of inviting you to my first appearance.

(He has a bad fit of coughing.)

Rademacher. That'll hardly be possible.

Florian. Say, isn't it queer? If you and I had stayed well, we'd have been deadly enemies.
Rademacher, Why?

Florian. Why — I'd have acted and you'd have written mean things about me — and I never like critics who say mean things about me. But this way we're the best of friends. Say, listen, tell me, Mr. Rademacher, did I look as bad as you do, a week ago?

Rademacher. There's a difference —

Florian. Nonsense. You have to exert your will-power, that's all. Do you know how I made myself well again? *(RADEMACHER looks at him.)* You needn't look at me like that — I'm nearly well anyway. I simply wouldn't allow any sad thoughts to come up in my mind.

Rademacher. How did you prevent it?

Florian. I thought of all the people who'd ever made me angry and I said the nastiest things I knew to them — in my thoughts. That's a great comfort, let me tell you. I even figured out whom I wanted to haunt when I was dead. There's a fellow critic of yours in Olmutz — a malicious beast — and then the manager who docked half my salary because I extemporized — and the audience laughing at *me* all the time and not at the fool play — he ought to have been grateful to me, instead of which — well, just wait! I have a talent for appearing, as a ghost or anything else — I could make a decent income even in heaven. I'd take a job with the Spiritualists.

(The NURSE *returns with* DR. HALMSCHLAEGER *and* DR. TANN.)

Tann (young, carelessly dressed, his hat on the back of his head, an unlighted cigar in his mouth). Come now, Halmschlaeger, don't stay here so long this time.

Halmschlaeger (young, carefully dressed, wears glasses and a small blond beard). No, I'll be through in a few minutes.

Tann. If you're not, I'll go on ahead and wait for you at the café.

Halmschlaeger. I'll be through here in a few moments.

Florian. Good evening, doctor.

Halmschlaeger. Why aren't you in bed? Mrs. Paschanda —

Florian. I've had all the sleep I need, doctor, I'm feeling fine now. May I invite you to my first performance?

Halmschlaeger (amused at first, then turns away to hide his face). Yes, yes. *(Goes to RADEMACHER.)* Well, my dear Rademacher, how are we today? (FLORIAN *motions to the*

NURSE *to see if she has appreciated his imitation of the doctor.)*

Rademacher. Pretty bad, doctor.

Halmschlaeger (reads the slate at the head of the bed while the NURSE holds the light.) 102.9 — well, we had 103.2 yesterday. This is an improvement. Good-night then. *(He turns to go.)*

Rademacher. Please, doctor —

Halmschlaeger. Do you want anything?

Rademacher. Please, doctor, how long will this last?

Halmschlaeger. You'll have to be patient for a little while yet.

Rademacher. That isn't what I mean, doctor. I mean when will it be — when will it be all over with me? *(TANN sits down at the table, idly turning over the papers there.)*

Halmschlaeger. What a way to talk! *(To the NURSE.)*
Has he had his medicine?

Nurse. I gave it to him at half-past seven, sir.

Rademacher. Doctor — please don't treat me just like — anybody — oh, I beg your pardon, sir!

Halmschlaeger (slightly impatient, but still amiable). Not so loud, please —

Rademacher. Just a word, doctor — I must know the truth — I *must,* for a particular reason.

Halmschlaeger. The truth? Why, I hope — of course we can't any of us see into the future, but I may say —

Rademacher. Doctor, suppose there was something I had to do, something very important — with the fate of others dependent on it — and my peace of mind — for my last hours —

Halmschlaeger (still friendly). Come, come — tell me more clearly what you want. But in as few words as possible, please. I have two more rooms to go through and if every patient took so much time — well, what is it?

Rademacher. There is someone I *must* speak to, doctor.

Halmschlaeger. You may write him if you want to. And you may see anyone you choose tomorrow afternoon from four to five. I have no objection.

Rademacher. That may be too late, doctor — I feel it will be too late — it may be all over by tomorrow morning — I must speak to him today.

Halmschlaeger. That's impossible. If you're so anxious about this matter why didn't you mention it yesterday?

Rademacher (insistently). You have been so good to me, doctor — I know it's an impertinence on my part — but you see, when you feel quite sure that tomorrow — or next day — the white-robed gentleman will come to carry you away — then you feel you can take liberties you wouldn't think of otherwise.

Tann. Well, Halmschlaeger, what's the trouble?

Halmschlaeger. Just a moment. *(To RADEMACHER, slightly impatient).* Well, then, what is it you want?

Rademacher. I *must* speak to a friend of mine, a Mr.
Weihgast, Alexander Weihgast.

Halmschlaeger. Alexander Weihgast? Do you mean the celebrated writer?

Rademacher. Yes.

Halmschlaeger. He is a friend of yours?

Rademacher. He was — in earlier days.

Halmschlaeger. Then write to him.

Rademacher. What good will that do me? He wouldn't find me here. I must speak to him today — at once — now.

Halmschlaeger (firmly). That is impossible, Mr. Rademacher, quite impossible. *(More gently.)* But to make you feel better, I will write to Mr. Weihgast, whom I happen to know personally, and ask him to come and see you tomorrow at any hour that suits him.

Rademacher. You know Weihgast, doctor? *(Suddenly.)*
Bring him here to me — bring him here.

Halmschlaeger. Oh, come now, Rademacher, this is just a little —

Rademacher (in great excitement). I know, doctor — I know it's asking a great deal — but you're so human,

doctor — you understand things humanly. You're not like the others, who judge by rote and rule. And when you know, doctor — when you know that here's a dying man who has just one wish, one wish on which so much depends for him, and you know you can fulfil that wish — doctor, please, please go and fetch him, bring him here to me.

Halmschlaeger (undecided, looks at his watch). Why — but even if I should do it — how can I ask it of him? — at this hour? Really, you know it's an imposition — can't you see that yourself?

Rademacher. Oh, I know my friend Weihgast. If you tell him that his old friend Rademacher is dying in the public hospital and wants to see him — he'll not miss that. I beg of you, doctor — it means only a short drive for you. But for me — for me —

Halmschlaeger. Yes, that's just it. It's of no importance to me, of course. But for you — the excitement might do you great harm.

Rademacher. Oh, doctor, as one man to another — what does an hour more or less matter?

Halmschlaeger (soothingly). Come, come. *(After a moment's pause.)* Well, I'll go to him. *(RADEMACHER attempts to thank him.)* Of course, I can't guarantee that he'll come with me. But since you wish it so much — *(RADEMACHER again attempts to speak.)* Never mind, that's all right. *(Turns away from him.)*

Tann. Well — at last!

Halmschlaeger. My dear Tann, would you mind taking a look through the other two rooms? There's very little to do — two injections — the nurse will tell you —

Tann. What's up?

Halmschlaeger (aside to him). It's a queer story. This poor devil here has been begging me to fetch an old friend of his, he has something very important to say to him, evidently. And who do you suppose this friend is? Weihgast, the well-known writer.

Tann. And you're going after him? See here, are you an errand boy? These people are forever abusing your good nature.

Halmschlaeger. That depends on how you look at it, my dear boy. To me, such happenings are the most interesting side of our profession.

Tann. Hm! — That's one point of view.

Halmschlaeger. Then you'll take the other rooms?

Tann. Why, certainly. But there'll be no café for us this evening, I suppose.

Halmschlaeger. I may get there later. *(He goes out into the larger room with TANN, the NURSE following them. When they have gone, FLORIAN slips in.)*

Florian. Well, what did you have to talk to the doctor about all this time?

Rademacher (excited, almost cheerful). I'm expecting a visitor — I'm expecting a visitor.
Florian (interested). A visitor? At this time of night?

Rademacher. Yes, my dear Jackwerth, and now, keep your eyes open. There'll be something for you to study — in my visitor's face. You take a look at the gentleman's face when he comes in and again when he goes out. *(More excited.)* Oh, if I only live through it! — if I only live through it! Give me a glass of water, Jackwerth, please. *(He drinks the water greedily.)* Thanks — thanks. Yes, the old machine *must* hold together that much longer, *if suddenly afraid*.) Oh, if he'll only come — if he'll only come — if he'll only come!

Florian. Who are you talking about?

Rademacher. Write to him? What good would that do me? I must have him here — opposite me — face to face — eye to eye — ah! —

Florian (alarmed). Mr. Rademacher —

Rademacher. Don't be alarmed about me, there's no need for it. I feel so light at heart — on my soul — I believe I'm not even afraid to die now. I sha'n't mind it at all — after he has been here. Florian Jackwerth, what can I do for you?

Florian (astonished). What?

Rademacher. I want to show my gratitude. It was you gave me this idea — yes, you. You shall be my heir. The key of my desk is under my pillow. You don't expect much, eh? Who knows? You may be mistaken — there may be masterpieces hidden there. Why, I feel better and better. Perhaps I may even get well again.

Florian. Of course you will.

Rademacher. If I do get well — if ever I set foot outside of this hospital alive, I swear I'll begin all over again.

Florian. Begin what?
Rademacher. I'll begin the fight again — I won't give up yet — I'm not so old — only fifty-four. That's no age at all, when a man's well and strong. And I am Somebody, Florian Jackwerth, I am Somebody — you can believe it. But I've had hard luck. I'm as good as many another who rides the high horse, my dear sir. I can measure myself with many another who thinks he's greater than I, because he's been more fortunate. *(Feverishly.)* If he only comes — if he only comes — oh, Lord God, I pray You — even if You have let me shift for myself these fifty-four years — I pray You now — give me strength for this last half hour, strength to even up as well as
I can. Let me see him sitting there before me — pale, crushed — as small before me now as he has felt himself superior all his life. Yes, my dear Jackwerth, the man I am waiting for is a friend of my youth. Twenty-five years ago — even twenty years ago — we were fond of each other, for we had begun at the same level. But we went different ways — he — higher and higher — and I — lower and lower. And today he is rich and famous and I'm a poor devil of a journalist dying in a public hospital. But what does that matter? — what does that matter — now that the moment has come when I can crush him? And I *will* crush him — if he only comes — if he only comes.

That was your sweetheart who came to see you this afternoon, Jackwerth — I know it. But what is all the ardor with which we wait for the coming of one we love — compared to the longing for someone we hate, someone we've hated all our lives — only we've forgotten to tell him so!

Florian. You mustn't let yourself get so excited, Mr. Rademacher. You're losing your voice.

Rademacher. Don't worry — once he is here I'll be able to talk.

Florian. Oh, you never can tell. Say, listen, Mr. Rademacher — I have a suggestion to make. Suppose we have a rehearsal? No, I'm not joking — I know — that's my business. Don't you see — it all depends on *how* you say things! What good will it do you if you say to him, "You're a rascal and I hate you?" that won't get over. He'll think to himself, "Let him scold, that's cheap, while he's here in bed with 103 degrees of fever and I'm walking about smoking a good cigar."

Rademacher. Oh, I'll have something more to say to him. No one minds being called a rascal nowadays. But if I tell him that he was ridiculous all his life, ridiculous in the eyes of those he loved most — he won't get over that so easily.

Florian. All right, talk it out — talk it out. Now imagine
I'm your friend. Here I stand, pockets full of money, head full of conceit. *(Acting.)* Well, here I am, old friend, you have something to say to me? Well? *(In his natural voice.)* There now, go on.

Rademacher (feverish, talking himself into angry excitement). Yes, I sent for you. But not to bid you farewell, in memory of our old friendship — no — I have something to tell you — before it is too late.

Florian (acting). Don't keep me in suspense, old man. What is it you want to tell me? *(Change as before.)* Well — go on — go on.

Rademacher. You think yourself better than I? My dear friend, you and I are not of the Great, and in the depths where we belong there is small difference — in hours like these. All your greatness is sham and pretense. Your fame? Merely a heap of newspaper notices that will be scattered to the winds the day after your death. Your friends? Flatterers who cringe to success; envious parasites who clench their fists at you when your back is turned; fools who find you just small enough for their admiration. But you are clever enough to realize all this yourself, at times. I didn't trouble you to come here just to tell you that. What I am going to tell you — it may be despicable of me — but it's astonishing how little we care whether we are despicable or not when we know we'll have no tomorrow to be ashamed of it in.... *(Rises.)* I've come near throwing it in your face a hundred times during the past few years — whenever we chanced to meet on the street and you were gracious enough to stop for a few words with me. My dear friend, not only do I know you as you are — and hundreds of others do, too — but your own belovéd wife knows you better than you dream. She realized what you were twenty years ago — in the prime of your youth and success. Yes, she realized it — and I knew that she did — for I was her lover two whole years. Many a time she came to me in disgust at your hollowness, your utter nothingness — came to me ready to run off with me. But I was poor and she was a coward — and so she stayed with you — and deceived you. It was easier that way, for all of us.

Florian (acting). Ha! Wretch! You lie!

Rademacher. I? *(As if awakening.)* Ah, yes — you take the key, Jackwerth. If he won't believe me, the letters are in my desk. You shall be my executor. There are many things in my desk — some treasures, perhaps. Who knows? It may be only necessary for me to die — to have them appreciated. Yes, then they'd make a fuss about me, especially when they know that I've died in poverty and misery — for I am dying in poverty and misery, as I have lived. Then there'll be speeches over my grave — you'll hear them talk about devotion to duty — great ability — a victim to his profession. Yes, that's true,
Florian Jackwerth, as long as I've had any profession I've been its victim. Do you know what's killing me? No — not those Latin names on the board up there. Oh, no — what's killing me is the bitterness of having to bow to people I despise, having to toady to them for a job — it's disgust at having to write things I did not believe to keep myself from starving: it's anger at having to grind out stuff for infamous slavedrivers who had stolen and swindled a fortune for themselves, and I had to help them do it with my talent. But I can't complain. I've received my share of the general contempt and hatred for them — my share of *that,* if of nothing else. *(The*

NURSE *comes in again.)*

Nurse. The doctor's coming back.

Rademacher (anxiously). Is he alone?

Nurse. No, there's a gentleman with him. *(RADEMACHER sinks back in his chair with a sigh of gratitude.)*

Florian. Pull yourself together now. Sorry I can't stay and see. *(He slips out quickly as HALMSCHLAEGER and WEIHGAST come in.)*

Halmschlaeger. The patient is in here.

Weihgast (he is a handsomely dressed, well-preserved man of about fifty-five. His beard is slightly gray.) In here? *(Goes to RADEMACHER, speaks cordially.)* Why, Rademacher — is it really you? And this is how we meet again? My dear old friend.

Rademacher. I thank you for coming.

Halmschlaeger (has motioned to NURSE to bring a chair for WEIHGAST). And now, Mr. Weihgast, may I, as physician in charge, ask you not to let this conversation last more than fifteen minutes? When the time is up, I will take the liberty of returning to lead you out.

Weihgast. Thank you, doctor, you are very kind.

Halmschlaeger. It is I who have to thank you. It required no slight sacrifice —

Weihgast. Oh, no, indeed. Don't mention it.

Halmschlaeger. And now, Mr. Rademacher, good-bye for a few moments. *(Threatens him amiably as if warning him not to get excited, then speaks to the NURSE and goes out with her.)*

Weihgast (he has given his hat, overcoat and cane to the

NURSE, *now sits down near* RADEMACHER, *speaks warmly, almost with sincerity).* And now, my dear Rademacher, what an idea! Why did you let them bring you here to the public hospital?

Rademacher. I'm quite content, they take good care of me here.

Weihgast. Yes, yes, of course. I know you're in good hands.
Dr. Halmschlaeger is a very capable physician and what is more, he is a good man. If, indeed, one can separate the individual of himself from the individual in his professional capacity! But still — you'll pardon me — why didn't you send for me?

Rademacher. How could I think —

Weihgast. Even if you haven't thought of your old friend these many years — surely you know I would be very ready — under such circumstances —

Rademacher. Don't let's talk of that —

Weihgast. As you wish, it was well meant. And it's not too late yet. Dr. Halmschlaeger tells me that it's only a question of time and good nursing — you will be out of the hospital in a few weeks and then we can arrange for a rest in the country —

Rademacher. There's little use in discussing that now.

Weihgast. Yes, yes. Dr. Halmschlaeger told me you were depressed in spirits. *(He does not like RADEMACHER'S steady glance but forces himself to endure it.)* But you sent for me? You wanted to speak to me? Well, I am ready. Why do you smile? Oh, no, I see, it's only the reflection of the light. The light is rather poor here. Well, I am waiting. I shall have to tell Dr. Halmschlaeger that you made no use of the first five minutes. Well?

(RADEMACHER opens his lips several times as if to speak, but does not say anything. There is a pause.)

Weihgast. And how have things gone with you all this time? *(Slightly embarrassed.)* Hm, that was an awkward question, I know — but I confess I'm just a little embarrassed. To judge by appearances, it would seem as if my lot had been the happier of the two. Still — if we only look at things clearly — who suffers the greatest disappointment in life? Isn't it always the man who has apparently achieved the most?
That sounds like a paradox, but it is the truth. Ah — if I should tell you — my life has been nothing but care and struggle! I don't know whether you've been following the more recent movements in literature — they're falling on me like a pack of hungry wolves — the "younger generation," I mean.
And ten years ago I was counted among the younger generation myself. Now they are trying to dethrone me. These new reviews — it sickens me just to read them. They treat me with scorn, with mock condescension — it's outrageous! Here I've worked and striven, and given of the best that was in me — oh, you may be glad you're out of that sort of thing! If I could choose, if I could begin all over again —

Rademacher. Well?

Weihgast. I'd rather be a peasant tilling the soil, or a shepherd on the hills, or an Arctic explorer searching for the Pole — oh, anything except a literary worker. But it's not too late yet.

Rademacher (with a strange smile). Are you going in search of the Pole?

Weihgast. No — but early next season there'll be a new play of mine out. Then they'll see — they'll see — I'm not so easily conquered! Just wait — just wait! And if all goes well, old friend, you must be there, too. I promise to send you tickets, although I must say your paper has done very little for me.
They completely ignored my last two books — but you have nothing to do with that department, have you? What nonsense I am talking — now tell me, what is it you want to say to me? If it hurts you to talk loud I can move nearer. *(There is a pause.)* And what will my wife say when I tell her that our old friend Rademacher is ill in the Public Hospital? — it's nothing but your pride, Rademacher, your confounded pride — but we won't talk about that now. Anyway, my wife is not in Vienna just now, she's gone to Abbazia. She's not been well for some time.

Rademacher. Nothing serious, I hope.

Weihgast (pressing his hand). Thank God, no! Ah, my dear friend, then I should be indeed unfortunate. When I am with her, I find myself again. I find my belief in myself, which I had all but lost — I find courage to work, desire to live. And the longer I live the more I see that this is the only true companionship. For my children —!

Rademacher. What about them? How are they?

Weihgast. My daughter is married. Yes, I'm twice a grandfather, although I know I don't look it. And the boy — the little boy! — is serving his volunteer year — getting into debt — he's just had a duel with a young Baron Wallerskirch — about a woman. Ah, dear friend, it's the same old foolishness — we grow old — life goes on its way about us.

Rademacher. Yes — yes. *(There is a pause.)*

Weihgast. But our time is nearly up. I am still waiting — what did you want to say to me? I am ready to do whatever you ask. Shall I speak to the Concordia people? Or would you like me to inquire at the editorial office of the *New Day* — in case you recover soon? Or, perhaps — pardon me for mentioning such a thing — if you need money —

Rademacher. No — no, I don't need anything. I just wanted to see you again, old friend — that is all. *(Holds out his hand.)*

Weihgast. Indeed! I am deeply touched! And then, when you are well again — we must see each other — more often —

(There is an embarrassing pause. The ticking of the clock in the larger room can be heard plainly.)

Halmschlaeger (coming in). Here I am again. Not too punctual, I hope.

Weihgast (rises, evidently relieved). No. We have finished what we had to say.

Halmschlaeger. That's good. I hope our patient will be calmer now.

Rademacher. Thank you.

Weihgast. Good-bye for the moment then, old friend. If our doctor here will permit it, I'll look in again in a few days.

Halmschlaeger. Certainly. I will give orders to have you admitted at any hour.

Weihgast. Oh, please don't make an exception for me.

(HALMSCHLAEGER motions to the NURSE, who helps WEIHGAST into his overcoat.)

Weihgast (to RADEMACHER). Good-bye once more — and a speedy recovery! Don't lose heart! *(He goes to the door with* HALMSCHLAEGER.)

Florian (slips in through curtain). Good evening, doctor.

Halmschlaeger. See here — aren't you in bed yet?

Weihgast (aside to HALMSCHLAEGER). Who's that man?
He stares at me so queerly.

Halmschlaeger. He's a poor devil of an actor.

Weihgast. Indeed?

Halmschlaeger. — who doesn't suspect that he'll be in his grave in less than a week.

Weihgast. Ah, indeed? *(His glance meets FLORIAN'S.)*

Halmschlaeger. That's why I'm not more strict with him.
There's no sense in keeping rules for the dying.

Weihgast. You are quite right. I am really glad of this opportunity of knowing you better, of looking in on you at your work, as it were. It interests me greatly for several reasons.

Halmschlaeger. May I ask a question? Was it really something so important — what your friend had to say?

Weihgast. Not in the least. We knew each other well — many years ago, and he wanted to see me once more — that was all.
But I think my coming has quieted him. *(The NURSE holds back the curtains and curtseys. WEIHGAST hands her a tip and goes out with HALMSCHLAEGER, followed by the NURSE.)*

Florian (hurries to RADEMACHER). Well, what happened? That man must have tremendous self-control. I can read faces — but I didn't see anything in his. How did he take it?

Rademacher (does not heed him). How pitiful are they — who must keep on living.

Florian. Mr. Rademacher, what has happened? How about the key to your desk?

Rademacher (as if awakening). My desk? Oh, do what you like with it — burn it up if you want to.

Florian. And the treasures in it? The masterpieces?

Rademacher. Masterpieces? And even if they were — there is no posterity except for the living. *(As if seeing a vision.)* Now he's downstairs — he walks down the drive — he goes out through the gate — out into the streets — the lamps are lit, the wagons roll on — people come and go — come and go — *(He rises very slowly.)*

Florian (looking at him sharply), Mr. Rademacher! —

Rademacher. What have I to do with him? What can his happiness or his cares matter to me? What should we two have to say to one another? *(He catches at FLORIAN'S hand.)* What have people like you and I to do with those who will still be alive tomorrow?

Florian (frightened). What do you want of me? Mrs. Paschanda! *(The NURSE hurries in with a light.)*

Rademacher (drops FLORIAN'S hand). Put out that light — I shall not — need it — *(He jails back in his chair.)*

Florian (clinging with both hands to the curtain). But now — isn't he —?

CURTAIN

PART IV. LITERATURE

A COMEDY

CHARACTERS



MARGARET

BARON CLEMENS

GILBERT

LITERATURE



SCENE — MARGARET'S *sitting room, the usual furnished room, neatly but simply furnished. A small fireplace to the right before which stands an armchair. A table, a small desk, a wardrobe and several chairs make up the furnishing of the room. There are two windows at back, and doors right and left.* BARON CLEMENS *is lounging in an armchair by the fire, smoking a cigarette and reading the paper. He wears a modish morning suit of dark gray.*

MARGARET *is standing by the window when the curtain rises. She wanders about the room, comes up behind* CLEMENS *and plays lightly with his hair. She seems nervous and uneasy.*

Clemens (reaches back for her hand and kisses it while he continues to read the paper). Horner is sure of himself — or rather of me. Listen, Waterloo, five to one; Barometer, twenty to one; Kiss Me, seven to one; Attia, sixteen to one —

Margaret. Sixteen to one?

Clemens. Lord Byron, one and a half to one; that's us, my dear.

Margaret. I know.

Clemens. And it's six weeks yet before the race.

Margaret. Horner appears to think it a dead certainty.

Clemens. Bravo! How she has learned all these phrases already!

Margaret. I knew those phrases before I knew you, my dear. Is it settled that you are to ride Lord Byron yourself?

Clemens. What a question! It's the Ladies' Cup! Who should I let ride for me? The odds wouldn't be any one and a half to one, I can tell you — if Horner didn't know that I was to ride.

Margaret. I believe that. You do look beautiful on a horse, dearest, perfectly stunning! I shall never forget that day in Munich — the day I met you, too —

Clemens. Ugh! — don't remind me of that. That was my unlucky day. Windisch had ten lengths advantage of me at the start or he never would have won that race. But this one is my game all right. And then the very next day off we go, you and I.

Margaret. Evening?

Clemens. Yes, why?

Margaret. I'm taking for granted that we get married in the morning.

Clemens. Quite right, my love.

Margaret. I'm so happy! *(Kisses him.)* And where do we go?

Clemens. To the estate, of course. I thought that was settled.

Margaret. Oh, yes, for later. But can't we have a few days on the Riviera first?

Clemens. That depends on whether I win the Ladies' Cup or not.

Margaret. It's a dead certainty!

Clemens. And, besides, there's no style to the Riviera in April.

Margaret. What difference does that make?

Clemens. It makes considerable difference, my dear. You still have certain notions as to what is correct — do forgive me for saying it — but they remind me of the comic papers.

Margaret. Clemens!

Clemens. Well, we can talk it over later. *(Takes up his paper.)* The Clown, fifteen to one.

Margaret. The Clown? He's not to run.

Clemens. How do you know?

Margaret. Szigrati told me.

Clemens. And when, pray?

Margaret. This morning in Freudenau, when you were talking to Milner.

Clemens. Szigrati is not the proper company for you.

Margaret. Jealous?

Clemens. Hardly. But from now on I think I'd better introduce you everywhere as my fiancée. *(MARGARET kisses him.)* And what was Szigrati telling you?

Margaret. He told me he didn't intend to run the Clown in the Ladies' Cup.

Clemens. You don't want to believe everything Szigrati tells you. He may be starting that rumor to make the odds longer.

Margaret. Why, that's gambling!

Clemens. Did you think there was no gambling about a horse race? It's only another kind of business for most men.

A man like Szigrati doesn't care a tuppenny for sport. He might as well be speculating in stocks. But we can allow him a hundred to one on the Clown if he wants it.

Margaret. I don't know about that. I saw him this morning and he's a very handsome horse.

Clemens. You are coming on! Where did you see the Clown?

Margaret. This morning. Butters rode him round the paddock right behind Kiss Me.

Clemens. Butters doesn't ride for Szigrati, that must have been a stable boy. But the Clown is deceiving, he's all looks and no wind. You'll soon learn the difference, though, with your talent. It's incredible, really, how quickly you've worked your way into all these things. You exceed my wildest expectations.

Margaret. I don't see why. You know perfectly well that all these things are not so very new to me. People of position came often to my parents' house, Count Libowski, oh, and ever so many others. And then, when I was living with my husband —

Clemens. Yes, yes — of course. I have no objection, on principle, to the cotton industry —

Margaret. Even if my husband did own a cotton mill, what has that to do with my personal point of view? I went my own way mentally. But don't let's talk of those days, they're far enough off now, thank fortune.

Clemens. But there were other days, nearer to the present.

Margaret. Naturally. Well?

Clemens. I meant — you couldn't have heard much about sporting interests in the crowd you went with in Munich, as far as I can judge.

Margaret. Suppose you stop reproaching me for the company you found me in?

Clemens. It wasn't meant for a reproach. Only I never can and never will understand how you came to be with such people.

Margaret. You talk as if they were a gang of thieves.

Clemens. I give you my word some of them looked like it. What I can't understand is how you, with your predilection for — well, let's say for cleanliness and fine perfumes — could endure sitting at the same table with them.

Margaret (smiling). You sat there yourself.

Clemens. Near them — not with them. And it was for your sake — only for your sake, as you very well know. However, I don't deny that some of them improved on acquaintance, there were some really interesting people among them. You mustn't think for a moment that I look down on a man because his clothes are shabby or badly cut, that isn't it. But there was something in their manners, in their general behavior, that got on my nerves.

Margaret. I can't see why.

Clemens. Now don't be touchy, my dear. Haven't I said that some of them were really interesting? Still, I can't understand how a lady could feel at home in their company for any length of time.

Margaret. You forget, my dear Clemens, that in a certain sense I am — or was — one of them.

Clemens. Oh, come now!

Margaret. They were artists.

Clemens. Here we are, back to that subject again!

Margaret. Yes, it's my one constant grief that you can't keep up with me there.

Clemens. Can't keep up with you? Oh, come now. I'm not so stupid as all that. But you know what I object to in your writing — you know it's a purely personal objection.

Margaret. There are many women who might have done worse things, in my position, than to write poems.

Clemens. But such poems — such poems! That's just the point. *(Takes a small book from the mantelpiece.)* I give you my word, every time I see this book, every time I think of it even, I am ashamed that you should have written it.

Margaret. You can't understand. That's all. Don't be angry, dear. If you did understand, you would be quite perfect and I suppose that is not to be. But what is it that worries you so? You know I haven't experienced any of all that —

Clemens. I hope not.

Margaret. It is all pure imagination.

Clemens. That's just it. How can a lady *imagine* anything like this? *(Reads.)*

"Drunk as with wine I hang upon thy neck
And I would suck thy soul from out thy lips."

(With a shake of his head.) How can a lady write stuff like that? And have it printed? Why, every man that reads it will think of the authoress and of the neck and — well, all the rest of it.

Margaret. But when I tell you that there never was such a neck?

Clemens. I know there wasn't — that's my good fortune — and yours, too, Margaret. But how the deuce did you ever imagine such things? Your first husband can't have inspired all these glowing love poems — you say he never understood you.

Margaret. Never. That's why I left him. How could I exist with a creature who cared for nothing but eating and drinking and cotton?

Clemens. Yes, yes. But that's three years ago, and these poems have been written since.

Margaret. Well, consider my position.

Clemens. You weren't starving. Your husband was mighty decent to you in the matter of money, I must say. You didn't have to earn your living. And even if they gave you a hundred guldens for a poem — I don't suppose they pay more than that — there was no need for you to write such a book.

Margaret. Dearest Clem — when I speak of my position I don't mean merely in regard to money. I mean my state of mind. You have no idea what that was — when I met you it was much better, I had learned to find myself as it were — but at first! I was so helpless — so distracted — I tried everything I could think of — I painted, I even gave English lessons in the Pension where I lived. Just think of it — I was only twenty-two, a divorced wife, and I hadn't a single soul on whom —

Clemens. Why didn't you stay in Vienna?

Margaret. Because I had quarrelled with my family. None of them understood me. There wasn't one of them could realize that a woman might ask for something more in life than just a husband, and good clothes and a social position. Ah, if I had had a child, it might all have been easier to bear — perhaps — perhaps not, who knows? I am a complex nature. And, besides, why do you complain? What better could I have done than to go to Munich? Would I have met you if
I hadn't?

Clemens. But that wasn't why you went there.

Margaret. I wanted to be free — mentally free. I wanted to see whether I had the ability to make my way of myself alone. And you can't deny that it looked as if I had that ability — I was well on the road to success and fame.

Clemens. Hm!

Margaret. But you were dearer to me than fame.

Clemens (good-naturedly). And more certain.

Margaret. I never thought of that. I loved you from the first. You were the sort of man I had longed for in my dreams. I knew that I could be really happy only with such a man. Birth, breeding — it's not an empty word after all — there's nothing like it. You know that's why I sometimes think —

Clemens. Well?

Margaret. I think sometimes there may be noble blood in my veins.

Clemens. How?

Margaret. It might be possible —

Clemens. I don't follow —

Margaret. I told you of the noblemen who came to my father's house —

Clemens. What has that to do with it?

Margaret. Who knows —?

Clemens. Margaret! How can you say such a thing?

Margaret. One can't say what one really thinks — to you.
That's your only fault. Otherwise, you're quite perfect. *(She nestles up to him.)* Oh, I love you so — so unbelievably! That very first evening when you came to the Café with Wangenhaim, I knew that you were the One Man for me. You came among us like a being from another world.

Clemens. I should hope so. And you didn't look as if you belonged there either. When I think of those people! That Russian girl, for instance, with her short hair, you know, the one that looked like a college student, only she didn't wear the cap.

Margaret. That was Miss Baranzewitch, a very talented painter.

Clemens. Yes, I know, you showed her to me one day at the Pinakothek, she was up on a ladder copying a picture.
And then the man with the Polish name —

Margaret (begins). Zrkd —

Clemens. Never mind, you don't have to say it now. He read something aloud one evening when I was there and didn't seem the least bit ashamed of it.

Margaret. He's remarkably talented.

Clemens. Oh, yes, they're all talented — in the Café. And then that fellow, that irritating —

Margaret. Who do you mean?

Clemens. You know who I mean — the man who used to make tactless remarks about the aristocracy.

Margaret. Oh, you mean Gilbert?

Clemens. Yes, that's the one. I don't want to defend all of my class, there are scoundrels everywhere, even among the poets, I've been told. But it's beastly bad manners, when one of us is present —

Margaret. That was just his way.

Clemens. I had to keep a tight rein on myself — or I should have said something —

Margaret. He was one of the most interesting, in spite of it. And then — you know he was jealous of you.

Clemens (dryly). Yes, I thought I noticed something of the kind. *(There is a pause.)*

Margaret. Oh, they were all jealous of you — you were so different. And then you know, they all made love to me more or less, just because I treated them all alike. You saw that, didn't you? What are you laughing at?

Clemens. It's funny, isn't it? If anyone had prophesied that
I should marry an habitué of the Café Maximilian! I liked the two young painters best of all, they were like something out of a farce. You know, the two that looked so much alike and shared everything in common, even the Russian lady on the ladder, apparently.

Margaret. I never bothered about such things.

Clemens. You know, I think the two were Jews.

Margaret. Why?

Clemens. Well, the jokes they made — and their accent —

Margaret. You might, spare me these anti-semitic remarks.

Clemens. There — there! Don't be offended. I know you're half-breed yourself. But really I have no objection to Jews. I had a tutor once, crammed me in Greek for the exams. — He was a Jew and a fine fellow, too — yes, yes, one meets all sorts of people. I don't regret having met your crowd in Munich, it's all in the game. But I must have seemed like the prince come to rescue you.

Margaret. Yes, you did. *(With her arms around his neck.)*
Dearest Clem —

Clemens. What are you laughing at?

Margaret. A sudden thought.

Clemens. Let's have it.

Margaret. "Drunk as with wine I hang upon thy neck."

Clemens (irritated). Oh, please — why must you always spoil the illusion?

Margaret. Tell me, Clemens — then you really wouldn't be proud to have the woman you love — your wife — become a great and famous poetess?

Clemens. I've told you already — you may call me stupid and narrow-minded if you like — but I assure you solemnly that if you begin to write such poems again, and even if they are written to me — and you print them and tell all the world of our love — I tell you then that the marriage is off, and so am I and you will never see me again.

Margaret. And *this* is the man who has had at least a dozen affairs that were town talk!

Clemens. Oh, bosh! — Town talk! I never told when one of them hung drunk on my neck, and had it printed that anybody could buy it for a gulden and a half. That's the point. I know there are people who live by that

sort of thing, but I call it indecent. I tell you, to me it's worse than for a woman to pose in tights as a Greek statue at Ronacher's — much worse. The Greek statue doesn't say Boo. But the things these poets say — it's outrageous!

Margaret (uneasy). Dearest, you forget that the poet does not always tell the truth.

Clemens. Does it make it any better when he lies about it?

Margaret. We don't call that lying, we call it "conventionalizing."

Clemens. H'm! That's another new word.

Margaret. Or we write of things we've never experienced, things we've dreamed or only invented.

Clemens. Please don't say *we,* Margaret. You're not one of them, thank the Lord.

Margaret. Who knows?

Clemens. What do you mean?

Margaret (tenderly). Dearest Clem — I must tell you —

Clemens. Tell me what?

Margaret. I am still one of them — I have not stopped writing —

Clemens. How is that?

Margaret. I am still writing, or rather I have just written something. The impulse to create is stronger than others can understand. I should have gone mad if I had not written —

Clemens. And what have you written now?

Margaret. A novel. There was so much that was tugging at my heart — it would have suffocated me. I said nothing to you thus far, but you must know finally. Kunigel is delighted with it.

Clemens. And who is Kunigel?

Margaret. My publisher.

Clemens. Then someone has read the novel?

Margaret. Of course, and many more will read it. You will be proud of me, Clemens.

Clemens. You are quite mistaken, my dear girl. I — I can't express what I think of your conduct. What's in the book?

Margaret. That's not so easy to state. My novel says about everything there is to be said about everything.

Clemens. Good Lord!

Margaret. And that's why I can promise you that I will never touch a pen again. It will not be necessary.

Clemens. Margaret, do you really love me?

Margaret. How can you ask it? I love you, only you. Whatever I may have seen or observed, my own experience has been very barren. I have waited for you —

Clemens. Then bring me your novel.

Margaret. I don't follow —

Clemens. You say you *had* to write it. Very well — but no one need read it. Bring it here and we'll throw it into the fire.

Margaret. Clem!

Clemens. I demand it of you — I have the right.

Margaret. But it isn't possible —

Clemens. And why not? If I wish it, if I make everything else dependent upon it — you understand? Maybe it will be possible then?

Margaret. But, Clemens, the novel is already printed.

Clemens. Printed!

Margaret. Yes, it will be on sale in a day or two.

Clemens. Margaret! And you never told me a word of all this?

Margaret. I couldn't, dearest. Wait till it comes out and then you'll forgive me — more than that, you will be proud of me.

Clemens. My dear girl, this is a serious matter.

Margaret. Clemens!

Clemens. Good-bye, Margaret!

Margaret. Clemens! You're going?

Clemens. It looks that way.'

Margaret. And when will you come back?

Clemens. I can't tell now. Good-bye.

Margaret (tries to hold him back). Clemens!

Clemens (shakes her off). Good-bye. *(He goes out.)*

Margaret. Clemens! Clemens! What does this mean? Has he left me? What shall I do? Clemens, is this the end? Oh, no, it cannot be — I must follow him. *(She looks about wildly for her hat. The bell rings outside.)* Ah! he's come back — he just wanted to frighten me. Oh, my Clemens! *(She runs to the door, then starts back as she hears GILBERT'S voice.)*

Gilbert (outside). I told you she was at home. *(He enters.)*
Good afternoon, Margaret.

Margaret (in utter surprise). You here!

Gilbert. Yes, even I, Amandus Gilbert.

Margaret. This is a surprise.

Gilbert. So I perceive. But without reason. I am passing through this town on my way to Italy. My real reason for coming here was to bring you — in memory of our former comradeship — a copy of my latest book. *(He holds the volume towards her. When she does not take it, he lays it on the table.)*

Margaret (mechanically). Thank you, you are very kind.

Gilbert. Don't mention it. You have a certain right to this book. *(He looks about the room.)* So this is where you're living now?

Margaret. Yes, but —

Gilbert. I know, merely temporary. Rather nice for a furnished room. But these family portraits on the walls would drive me crazy.

Margaret. My landlady is the widow of a General.

Gilbert. Don't bother to make excuses.

Margaret. Excuses? I had no such intention.

Gilbert. Strange, isn't it, to think that —

Margaret. To think what?

Gilbert. Why not? I was just thinking of your little room in the Steinsdorfer Strasse with the balcony over the Isar. Do you remember it, Margaret? *(MARGARET turns away as if she had not heard. There is a pause.)*

Gilbert (suddenly). Margaret, you behaved atrociously!

Margaret. What!

Gilbert. Or would you prefer a less definite expression? No other word fits the case. And it was all so unnecessary. An honest and open confession would have answered every purpose. But to run away, by night

and fog —

Margaret. It was neither night nor fog. I left Munich on the eight-thirty express on a bright sunny morning.

Gilbert. Still, we might have said good-bye. *(He sits down.)*

Margaret. The Baron may return at any moment.

Gilbert. Well? You're hardly likely to have told him that you have lain in my arms and adored me. I am merely an old friend from Munich. I suppose your old friends may visit you?

Margaret. Any other — but not you.

Gilbert. Oh, you misunderstand. I come now, really, only as a good friend. All else is over and done with forever. *(He points to the book.)* You will see.

Margaret. What is that?

Gilbert. My latest novel.

Margaret. You write novels?

Gilbert. I do.

Margaret. And since when?

Gilbert. I do not catch your meaning.

Margaret. Why — I seem to remember that your special field was the Short sketch, the observing of everyday happenings —

Gilbert (excited). My field? The world is my field. I write what I please. I permit no limitations to my talent. I know of no reason why I should not write a novel —

Margaret. Oh, well — but it was the opinion of authoritative criticism that —

Gilbert. And what is authoritative criticism?

Margaret. I remember, for instance, one article by Neumann —

Gilbert (angry). Neumann is an idiot — I knocked him down.

Margaret. You did?

Gilbert. Mentally, I mean — mentally. You were as angry as I was about it at the time. We agreed absolutely that Neumann was an idiot. "How dare this nonenity," these were your very words, "how dare this nonenity venture to set a limit for your talent? How dare he attempt to strangle your next book before it has seen the light?" That was what you said, and now you quote this space-filling fool?

Margaret. Please don't scream so! My landlady —

Gilbert. I cannot stop to consider generals' widows when my nerves are all of a quiver.

Margaret. But what have I said to make you so angry? You are ridiculously sensitive.

Gilbert. Sensitive? You call me sensitive? You? The woman who went into hysterics if the youngest cub reporter in the tiniest sheet dared to say one word against her!

Margaret. I don't remember that there ever was a word said against me.

Gilbert. Oh, indeed! Well, you may be right. Even the press can be polite to pretty women.

Margaret. Polite? Do you mean to insinuate that I was praised from mere politeness? And your own opinion —

Gilbert. I don't take back anything I may have said. I would merely like to remind you that your few good poems were written during the time of our acquaintance.

Margaret. You take the credit to yourself then?

Gilbert. Would you have written them without me? Are they not written to me?

Margaret. No.

Gilbert. No? Incredible!

Margaret. They were not written to you.

Gilbert. I am dumbfounded. Shall I remind you of the situations in which your finest verses were created?

Margaret. My poems were written to an ideal — *(GILBERT points to himself)* — an ideal whose earthly incarnation you happened to be just then.

Gilbert. Excellent. Where did you get that? You know what the Frenchman says in such a case? "*C'est de la littérature!*"

Margaret (mocks his tone). Ce n'est pas de la littérature.
But it's the truth. Or did you really believe that I meant you when I sang of a slender youth with clustering curls? You were fat even then — and this was never curly.

(She passes her hand lightly over his hair, GILBERT catches her hand and kisses it.)

Margaret (gently). Nonsense.

Gilbert. You thought they were curls then. Or you called them curls — one can stretch a point considerably for the sake of sound and rhythm. Didn't I call you, in one of my own sonnets, "my clever maiden," and yet you were neither clever nor — no, I won't be unjust, you *were* clever, impertinently, disgustingly clever. And you won out. But why should I wonder at it — you were always something of a snob. Well, now you have your desire. You have landed him safely, your highborn youth with the well-kept hands and the neglected brain, the famous jockey and fencer, tennis player, dead shot, and supreme breaker of hearts — brrrrr! Marlitt

herself could not have invented anything more inanely disgusting. Still, I venture to question whether all this will content you in the long run — you who have known something Higher. I can only say this, in my eyes you have become a Pariah of the Emotions.

Margaret. You thought that out on the train.

Gilbert. I didn't — it just occurred to be now.

Margaret. Better make a note of it. It's a good phrase.

Gilbert. I have another for you. Listen. Once you were the Woman, now you are only the Female. Yes, that is it. What can possibly attract you to that man, what, but the lowest, the most animal —

Margaret. You needn't talk.

Gilbert. My dear, I always had a soul as well.

Margaret. Yes, that was all — sometimes.

Gilbert. Don't attempt to degrade our love, you will not succeed. It will still remain the greatest thing in your life.

Margaret. And to think that I endured this sort of talk for a whole year!

Gilbert. Endured it? You revelled in it. Don't be ungrateful, I am not. However atrocious your behavior at the last may have been, I shall not let it spoil the memory for me. I will even say more — it was all a part of it.

Margaret. You don't say?

Gilbert. Yes, you have a right to know it now. Just as you began to turn from me, drawn by your longing for the warm stable— "*la nostralgie de l'écurie,*" just at that time I was beginning to realize that I had done with you.

Margaret. Not really?

Gilbert. It was characteristic of you that you did not notice this fact. Yes, I was done with you, I no longer needed you. All that you could give me had been given, your mission was ended. You knew this in the depths of your soul, you knew it, unconsciously you were conscious of it —

Margaret. Oh, don't be so brilliant.

Gilbert (does not heed the interruption). Your time was over. Our love had served its purpose. I do not regret it.

Margaret. But I do.

Gilbert. Excellent! For the connoisseur this little remark covers all the deep-lying difference between the artist and the amateur. To you our love is now nothing more than the memory of a few wild nights, of a few deep talks in the shadows of the trees. I have made a work of art of it.

Margaret. And so have I.

Gilbert. What do you mean by that?

Margaret. I can do whatever you can. I have written a novel, too, a novel into which I have woven our relations. I have given our love, or what we called by that name, to immortality.

Gilbert. I wouldn't talk about immortality, if I were you, until the second edition is out.

Margaret. It is rather a different matter when I write a novel — or when you do it.

Gilbert. Rather.

Margaret. You are a free man. You do not need to steal the hours for your art. You do not risk your future by doing so.

Gilbert. And do you?

Margaret. Yes, I have done it. Clemens left me just now, because I told him I had written a novel.

Gilbert. He left you? For good?

Margaret. I do not know. It may be. He left me in anger and I haven't yet learned what to expect of him.

Gilbert. Then he forbids you to write? He does not want you to use your brain. Excellent! And this is what we call the Flower of the Nation! And you? Are you not ashamed to experience the same sensations for an idiot like this, as for —

Margaret. I forbid you to speak of him that way. You will never be able to understand him.

Gilbert. Hah!

Margaret. You don't understand why he objects to my writing. It is simply because of his love for me. He feels that when I write I am in a world he cannot enter. And then, too, he is ashamed for me that I should bare my inmost soul for all the world to see. He wants to keep me for himself — for himself alone. And this is the reason why he rushed away — no, not rushed — Clemens is not the sort of man to rush —

Gilbert. Well observed. But he is gone, we need not discuss the gait. And he has gone because he cannot endure that you should follow your impulse to create — that you should work.

Margaret. Ah, yes, if he could only understand. But it seems that cannot be. I could be the best, the truest wife in the world if only I could find the one perfect man.

Gilbert. Which means to say that he is not the perfect man either.

Margaret. I said nothing of the kind.

Gilbert. Can't you see he is enslaving you — that he's ruining you — that he is trying to crush out the best in you just from pure selfishness? Think of the woman you once were. Think of the freedom you enjoyed when

you loved me — freedom to develop heart and brain. Think of the noble minds that were your daily companion: think of the ardent band of disciples who sat at my feet and included you in their worship. Don't you wish yourself back again? Don't you sometimes think of the little room with the balcony — and the Isar murmuring below. *(He takes her hand and draws her close to him.)*

Margaret. Ah, no — no.

Gilbert. It can all be again. It needn't be just the Isar — any river will do. Listen, Margaret, I have a suggestion to make.
If he returns, tell him you have some urgent affairs to settle in Munich and spend the time with me there. You are as beautiful as ever — we can be happy again, Margaret, happy as we once were. *(Very near her.)* Do you remember? "Drunk as with wine, I hang upon thy neck—"

Margaret (tears herself away). No — no — go away, please — leave me — I — I don't love you any more.

Gilbert. Ah! Then — I beg your pardon. *(Pause.)* Goodbye, Margaret.

Margaret. Good-bye.

Gilbert. Good-bye. *(Turns back again.)* Won't you give me a copy of your book as a parting gift? I gave you mine.

Margaret. It isn't out yet. I can't get a copy until next week.

Gilbert. May I ask what sort of a novel it is?

Margaret. It is the story of my life. But, of course, I have veiled the facts so that I can't be recognized.

Gilbert. How did you do that?

Margaret. Quite simply. The heroine is not a poetess, she is a painter.

Gilbert. Very clever.

Margaret. Her first husband is not a cotton manufacturer, but a stock broker. And then it is not a tenor with whom she deceives him.

Gilbert. Ha! ha! ha!

Margaret. What are you laughing at?

Gilbert. So you deceived him with a tenor? That's news to me.

Margaret. Who said I did?

Gilbert. You yourself, this very minute.

Margaret. Nonsense. I said the heroine of my novel deceived her husband with a baritone.

Gilbert. A bass would be more dramatic, a mezzosoprano more piquante.

Margaret. Then it is not to Munich she goes, but to Dresden. And there she has an affair with a sculptor.

Gilbert. Which is me, veiled?

Margaret. Very much veiled. The sculptor is young, handsome, and a genius. And yet she leaves him.

Gilbert. For whom?

Margaret. Guess?

Gilbert. For a jockey, presumably.

Margaret. Silly!

Gilbert. For a Count? A Prince?

Margaret. No, he is an Archduke.

Gilbert (bowing). You have indeed spared no expense.

Margaret. An Archduke who leaves the Court for her sake — marries her and takes her to the Canary Islands.

Gilbert. Canary Islands? Delicious. And then?

Margaret. That ends it.

Gilbert. It will certainly interest me — particularly the disguises.

Margaret. Even you would never recognize me if —

Gilbert. If what?

Margaret. If it weren't that one of the last chapters contains our entire correspondence.

Gilbert. What?

Margaret. Yes, all the letters I wrote you — and yours to me — are in the book.

Gilbert. Pardon me, but how did your get your letters to me? I have them.

Margaret. I made a draft of each before I wrote it out.

Gilbert. You did?

Margaret. Yes.

Gilbert. A draft of each — of these notes penned apparently in trembling haste! "Just a line, belovéd, before I go to rest — my eyes are closing—" And then when your eyes did close, you copied it out to send me!

Margaret. Why should you complain?

Gilbert. I might have known it! I ought to be thankful she didn't copy them from a "Letter Writer for Lovers." Oh, how my castle is falling — the past is but a loathsome heap of ruins — she made a draft of her letters!

Margaret. Cheer up! These letters of mine may be all that is known of you, some years hence.

Gilbert. And besides which, that puts us in a nice position.

Margaret. How?

Gilbert (touching his book). They're in here, too.

Margaret. What's in where?

Gilbert. Here in my novel.

Margaret. What is in your novel?

Gilbert. Our letters, yours and mine.

Margaret. And how did you get your own? *I* have them.
Ah ha! you made a draft, too.

Gilbert. Oh, no, I copied them for myself before I sent them off. They were too good to lose. There are some here that you never received. They were much too fine for you — you never would have understood them.

Margaret. Yes, but — for pity's sake, if that is so — *(She turns the leaves of the book hastily.)* Yes, here they are. Why — this is just — just as if we proclaimed aloud to the whole world that we two — Great Heavens! Is that letter here, too, the one you sent me, the morning after the first night —

Gilbert. Of course. That one was superb!

Margaret. Oh, this is dreadful — dreadful! It will be a European scandal. And Clemens! For God's sake, Clemens! I begin to hope he will not return. I am lost — and so are you. Wherever you may hide yourself he will find you and he will shoot you down like a mad dog.

Gilbert (putting his book in his pocket). What a hackneyed comparison.

Margaret. What ever put this crazy idea into your head?
To publish the letters of the woman you pretended to love?
It proves that you are no gentleman.

Gilbert. Delicious! you've done the very same thing yourself.

Margaret. I am a woman.

Gilbert. Ah, now you can remember that fact.

Margaret. Yes, it's true — I have nothing to reproach you with — we are worthy of one another. Clemens is right. We are worse than the women who show themselves in tights at Ronacher's. We lay bare our souls to the public gaze, we expose shamelessly all our most intimate happiness, all our secret griefs! oh, shame on us! Clemens will be quite right if he does turn me out. *(Suddenly.)* Come, Amandus.

Gilbert. What is it now?

Margaret. I accept your suggestion.

Gilbert. What suggestion?

Margaret. I will flee with you. *(She runs about looking for her coat and hat.)*

Gilbert. What an idea! What are you about now?

Margaret (pinning on her hat, scrambling into her coat in great excitement). It can all be as before — you said so yourself — it needn't be the Isar — any river will do. There! I'm ready now.

Gilbert. This is absolute madness. Where could we flee to?
Didn't you just say he would find me anywhere? If you're with me he'd find you, too. It would be much wiser for each of us to go alone.

Margaret. Wretch! Would you desert me now? And you were at my feet a moment ago — aren't you ashamed of yourself?

Gilbert. Why should I be? I am a nervous sick man, full of moods. *(MARGARET has run to the window, now screams.)* What's the matter now? What will the General's widow think of me?

Margaret. It's Clemens! He's coming here.

Gilbert. Then — perhaps — *(He turns to the door.)*

Margaret. You're going?

Gilbert. I did not come to call on the Baron.

Margaret. He will meet you on the stairs, that will be worse. You must stay. I will not be the only victim.

Gilbert. Don't be so idiotic. What are you afraid of? He can't possibly have read both books since he left here. Do come to your senses. Take off that hat — put your coat away. *(He helps her out of her coat and hat.)* If he sees you like this, he'd surely suspect something.

Margaret. I don't care. I want to get it over with, the sooner the better. I can't endure the suspense. I shall tell him everything.

Gilbert. Everything?

Margaret. Yes, and while you are here, too. If I confess all he may forgive me.

Gilbert. And how about me? I have something better to do than to stay here and be shot down like a mad dog by a jealous Baron. *(Bell rings outside.)*

Margaret. There he is — there he is.

Gilbert. You shall not say a word.

Margaret. I will — I will tell everything.

Gilbert. Very well, then, in that case I shall sell my life dearly.

Margaret. What will you do?

Gilbert. I will fling a few truths in his face — truths no Baron has ever heard before. *(CLEMENS enters. When he sees them, he is constrained, very cool and polite.)*

Clemens. Ah! Mr. Gilbert, is it not?

Gilbert. It is, Baron. I am on my way South and could not resist this opportunity to pay my respects to an old friend.

Clemens. I see. *(There is a pause.)* But I seem to have interrupted your conversation. I am sorry for that. Please don't let me disturb you.

Gilbert. Let me see, what were we talking about?

Clemens. Maybe I can help you there. In Munich, at least, it was usually your books we were talking about.

Gilbert. Ah, excellent — and I believe we *were* speaking of my latest novel just as you came in.

Clemens. Please continue. You can talk about literature to me now, can't he, Margaret? Is it a realistic novel? Or symbolic? Something from your own experience or merely conventionalized?

Gilbert. In a certain sense all that one writes must have been experienced.

Clemens. Indeed? That is most interesting.

Gilbert. To paint a Nero it is necessary that one should have fired Rome, mentally, at least.

Clemens. Of course.

Gilbert. And where should we find inspiration, if not within ourselves? Where find our models if not in the life around us?

(MARGARET grows more and more uneasy.)

Clemens. The trouble is that the models themselves are so seldom consulted about it. I must say, if I were a woman I'd protest against having everybody told that I — *(Sharply.)* In decent society we call that compromising a woman.

Gilbert. I don't know whether I may class myself as belonging to decent society, but I call it ennobling a woman.

Clemens. Oh!

Gilbert. The essential fact is that the thing must be well done. What can it matter, in the higher sense, if one does know that a woman has been happy in the arms of this man or that?

Clemens. Mr. Gilbert, I call your attention to the fact that you are speaking in the presence of a lady.

Gilbert. I am speaking in the presence of a good comrade, whose opinions on such matters are likely to coincide with my own.

Clemens. Indeed?

Margaret (runs to CLEMENS and jails at his feet). Clemens — Clemens!

Clemens (dumbfounded). Why, Margaret!

Margaret. Forgive me, Clemens!

Clemens. But, Margaret — *(To GILBERT.)* Mr. Gilbert, this is a most painful — Margaret, do stand up — it's all right. *(MARGARET still on her knees, clasps her hands and gazes up at him.)* Yes, yes, it's all right — do get up. *(She rises.)* It's all settled I tell you — you have only to telephone to Kunigel. I have made all arrangements. The plates will be destroyed — Is that right?

Gilbert. May I ask — is it the new novel that's to be destroyed?

Clemens. Then you know? I fear, Mr. Gilbert, you were somewhat mistaken as to that comradeship.

Gilbert. Yes. There's nothing more for me to do than to ask a general pardon. I am quite crushed.

Clemens. I regret that you should have been obliged to witness a scene so — I had almost said — so conjugal.

Gilbert. Oh, I shall not disturb you any longer. And before I go, Baron, may I take the liberty — as a slight token of my esteem and as a sign that all misunderstanding between us is now over, — may I hand you a copy of my latest novel?

Clemens. You are very kind. I must confess German novels are not in my line, but yours shall be the last I read — no, the last but one.
Margaret and Gilbert (together). The last but one?

Clemens. Yes.

Margaret. And the very last?

Clemens. Yours, my dear. *(He takes a book from his pocket.)* I asked for one copy to bring home to you, to both of us. *(MARGARET and GILBERT exchange glances of consternation.)*

Margaret. How good you are. *(Takes the book.)* Yes, this is it —

Clemens. We will read it together.

Margaret (with sudden decision). No, Clemens — no, I cannot accept such kindness. *(With a fine gesture she throws the book into the fire.)* There! All that part of my life is over and done with forever.

Gilbert (delighted). Margaret!

Clemens. Margaret! What have you done?

Margaret (stands before the fire until she sees that the book is burning, then she throws herself into his arms). Can you doubt now that I love you?

Gilbert (greatly pleased), I don't seem to be at all necessary here. *(Bowing, as he goes toward the door.)* Madame! — Baron! — *(To himself, as he turns to go.)* But oh! if I could have used that closing scene! *(He goes out.)*

CURTAIN

The Lonely Way (1904)

A DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS

Original German Title: 'Der einsame Weg'

Translated by Edwin Björkman, 1915

The premiere of the five-act play *Der einsame Weg* took place on 13 February 1904 in Berlin. The plot is set in contemporary Vienna, where, after many years, the painter Julian Fichtner reencounters his former lover Gabriele. In the past he had seduced and abandoned her to maintain his artistic freedom. She had married the academy professor Wegrath and now has two grown children, Felix and Johanna. No one suspects that Felix is in fact Julian's son. Gabriele, who is terminally ill and knows she has little time left to live, reveals the truth to the children. Julian hopes to be a father figure to his newfound son, but Felix remains loyal to Wegrath, the 'false' father and true human being. Johanna, meanwhile, resists the future her mother has planned for her — she refuses to become engaged to the young doctor Reumann, having fallen in love with Herr von Sala, an old family friend she has known since childhood. Sala, however, suffers from his own fatal illness...

The drama was written between 1900 and 1903 and underwent several major revisions. Early versions were titled *Bachelors* and *Egoists*; later, Schnitzler considered titles such as *Lonely Paths* and *Paths into Darkness*. The drama enjoyed a mixed reception from the public and critics. After the Berlin premiere, Schnitzler noted in his diary: "The reviews largely state a weak performance or a failure, but some are highly complimentary."



Schnitzler, close to the time of publication

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INTRODUCTION



HERMANN BAHR, THE noted playwright and critic, tried one day to explain the spirit of certain Viennese architecture to a German friend, who persisted in saying: "Yes, yes, but always there remains something that I find curiously foreign." At that moment an old-fashioned Spanish state carriage was coming along the street, probably on its way to or from the imperial palace. The German could hardly believe his eyes and expressed in strong terms his wonderment at finding such a relic surviving in an ultra-modern town like Vienna.

"You forget that our history is partly Spanish," Bahr retorted. "And nothing could serve better than that old carriage to explain what you cannot grasp in our art and poetry."

A similar idea has been charmingly expressed by Hugo von Hofmannsthal in the poem he wrote in 1892 — when he was still using the pseudonym of "Loris" — as introduction to "Anatol." I am now adding a translation of that poem to my own introduction, because I think it will be of help in reading the plays of this volume. The scene painted by Hofmannsthal might, on the whole, be used as a setting for "Countess Mizzie." For a more detailed version of that scene he refers us to "Canaletto's Vienna" — that is, to the group of thirteen Viennese views which were painted about 1760 by the Venetian Bernardo Belotto (who, like his more famous uncle and model, Antonio Canale, was generally called Canaletto), and which are now hanging in one of the galleries of the *Kunsthistorische Hofmuseum* at Vienna. The spirit of those pictures may be described, I am told, as one of stately grace. They are full of Latin joy in life and beauty. They speak of an existence constantly softened by concern for the amenities of life. It is just what survives of their atmosphere that frequently makes foreigners speak of Vienna with a tender devotion not even surpassed by that bestowed on Paris or Rome.

An attempt to understand the atmosphere and spirit of modern Vienna will carry us far toward a correct appreciation of Schnitzler's art. And it is not enough to say that Vienna is one of the oldest cities in Europe. It is not even enough to say that it preserves more of the past than Paris or London, for instance. What we must always bear in mind is its position as the meeting place not only of South and North but also of past and present. In some ways it is a melting-pot on a larger scale than New York even. Racially and lingually, it belongs to the North. Historically and psychologically, it belongs to the South. Economically and politically, it lives very much in the present. Socially and esthetically, it has always been strongly swayed by tradition. The anti-Semitic movement, which formed such a characteristic feature of Viennese life during the last few decades, must be regarded as the last stand of vanishing social traditions against a growing pressure of economical requirements.

Like all cities sharply divided within itself and living above a volcano of half-suppressed passions, Vienna tends to seek in abandoned gayety, in a frank surrender to the senses, that forgetfulness without which suicide would seem the only remaining alternative. Emotions kept constantly at the boiling-point must have an outlet, lest they burst their container. Add to this sub-conscious or unconscious craving for a neutral outlet, the traditional pressure of the Latin inheritance, and we have the greater part of the causes that explain Schnitzler's preoccupation with the themes of love and death. For Schnitzler is first of all Viennese.

Arthur Schnitzler was born at Vienna on May 15, 1862. His father was Professor Johann Schnitzler, a renowned Jewish throat specialist. I am told that *Professor Bernhardi* in the play of the same name must be

regarded as a pretty faithful portrait of the elder Schnitzler, who, besides his large and important practice, had many other interests, including an extensive medical authorship and the editing of the *Wiener klinische Rundschau*. It is also to be noticed that *Professor Bernhardi* has among his assistants a son, who divides his time between medicine and the composition of waltz music.

The younger Schnitzler studied medicine at the Vienna University, as did also his brother, and obtained his M.D. in 1885. During the next two years he was attached to the resident staff of one of the big hospitals. It was also the period that saw the beginning of his authorship. While contributing medical reviews to his father's journal, he was also publishing poems and prose sketches in various literary periodicals. Most of his contributions from this time appeared in a publication named "*An der schönen blauen Donau*" (By the Beautiful Blue Danube), now long defunct.

He was also continuing his studies, which almost from the start seem to have turned toward the psychic side of the medical science. The new methods of hypnotism and suggestion interested him greatly, and in 1889 he published a monograph on "Functional Aphonia and its Treatment by Hypnotism and Suggestion." In 1888 he made a study trip to England, during which he wrote a series of "London Letters" on medical subjects for his father's journal. On his return he settled down as a practicing physician, but continued to act as his father's assistant. And as late as 1891-95 we find him named as his father's collaborator on a large medical work entitled "Clinical Atlas of Laryngology and Rhinology."

There are many signs to indicate uncertainty as to his true calling during those early years. The ensuing inner conflict was probably sharpened by some pressure exercised by his father, who seems to have been anxious that he should turn his energies undividedly to medicine. To a practical and outwardly successful man like the elder Schnitzler, his own profession must have appeared by far the more important and promising. While there is no reason to believe that his attitude in this matter was aggressive, it must have been keenly felt and, to some extent at least, resented by the son. One of the dominant notes of the latter's work is the mutual lack of understanding between successive generations, and this lack tends with significant frequency to assume the form of a father's opposition to a son's choice of profession.

This conflict cannot have lasted very long, however, for the younger Schnitzler proved quickly successful in his purely literary efforts. The "Anatol" sketches attracted a great deal of attention even while appearing separately in periodicals, and with their publication in book form, which occurred almost simultaneously with the first performance of "A Piece of Fiction" at a Viennese theater, their author was hailed as one of the most promising among the younger men. From that time he has been adding steadily to his output and his reputation. When his collected works were issued in 1912, these included four volumes of plays and three volumes of novels and stories. Since then he has finished another play and two volumes of prose sketches.

It is rare to find an author turning with such regularity from the epic to the dramatic form and back again. And it is still more rare to find him so thoroughly at home and successful in both fields. In Schnitzler's case these two parallel veins have mutually supported and developed each other. Time and again he has treated the same theme first in one form and then in another. And not infrequently he has introduced characters from his plays into his stories, and vice versa. A careful study of his other works would undoubtedly assist toward a better understanding of his plays, but I do not regard such a study essential for the purpose. It is my belief that Schnitzler has given himself most fully and most typically in his dramatic authorship, and it is to this side of his creative production I must confine myself here.

"Anatol" is nothing but seven sketches in dramatic form, each sketch picturing a new love affair of the kind supposed to be especially characteristic of Viennese life. The man remains the same in all these light

adventures. The woman is always a different one. The story is of the kind always accompanying such circumstances — one of waxing or waning attraction, of suspicion and jealousy, of incrimination and recrimination, of intrigue and counter-intrigue. The atmosphere is realistic, but the actuality implied is sharply limited and largely superficial. There is little attempt at getting down to the roots of things. There is absolutely no tendency or thesis. The story is told for the sake of the story, and its chief redeeming quality lies in the grace and charm and verve with which it is told. These were qualities that immediately won the public's favor when "Anatol" first appeared. And to some extent it must be counted unfortunate that the impression made by those qualities was so deep and so lasting. There has been a strong tendency observable, both within and outside the author's native country, to regard him particularly as the creator of *Anatol*, and to question, if not to resent, his inevitable and unmistakable growth beyond that pleasing, but not very significant starting point.

And yet his next dramatic production, which was also his first serious effort as a playwright, ought to have proved sufficient warning that he was moved by something more than a desire to amuse. "A Piece of Fiction" (*Das Märchen*) must be counted a failure and, in some ways, a step backward. But its very failure is a promise of greater things to come. It lacks the grace and facility of "Anatol." Worse still, it lacks the good-humor and subtle irony of those first sketches. Instead it has purpose and a serious outlook on life. The "piece of fiction" refers to the "fallen" woman — to the alleged impossibility for any decent man to give his whole trust to a woman who has once strayed from the straight path. *Fedor Denner* denounces this attitude in the presence of a young girl who loves him and is loved by him, but who belongs to the category of women under discussion. When he learns her history, he struggles vainly to resist the feelings of distrust and jealousy which he had declared absurd a little while earlier. And the two are forced at last to walk their different ways. Unfortunately the dialogue is heavy and stilted. The play is a tract rather than a piece of art, and the tirades of *Fedor* are equally unconvincing when he speaks for or against that "fiction" which is killing both his own and the girl's hope of happiness in mutual love. Yet the play marks a step forward in outlook and spirit.

Schnitzler's interest in hypnotism, which had asserted itself in the first scene of "Anatol," appears again in the little verse-play, "Paracelsus," which followed. But this time he used it to more purpose. By the help of it, a woman's innermost soul is laid bare, and some very interesting light is shed on the workings of the human mind in general.

"Amours" (*Liebelei*) may be regarded as a cross, or a compromise, between "Anatol" and "A Piece of Fiction." The crudeness of speech marking the latter play has given room to a very incisive dialogue, that carries the action forward with unfailing precision. Some of the temporarily dropped charm has been recovered, and the gain in sincerity has been preserved. "Amours" seems to be the first one of a series of plays dealing with the reverse of the gay picture presented in "Anatol." A young man is having a love affair with two women at the same time, one of them married, the other one a young girl with scant knowledge of the world. Yet she knows enough to know what she is doing, and she has sufficient strength of mind to rise above a sense of guilt, though she is more prone to be the victim of fear. Then the married woman's husband challenges the young man, who is killed. And the girl takes her own life, not because her lover is dead, not because of anything she has done, but because his death for the sake of another woman renders her own faith in him meaningless.

"Outside the Game Laws" (*Freiwild*) is another step ahead — the first play, I think, where the real Arthur Schnitzler, the author of "The Lonely Way" and "Countess Mizzie," reveals himself. It has a thesis, but this is implied rather than obtruded. In style and character-drawing it is realistic in the best sense. It shows already the typical Schnitzlerian tendency of dealing with serious questions — with questions of life and death — in a

casual fashion, as if they were but problems of which road to follow or which shop to enter. It has one fault that must appear as such everywhere, namely, a division of purpose. When the play starts, one imagines that those "outside the game laws" are the women of the stage, who are presented as the legitimate prey of any man caring to hunt them. As the play goes on, that starting point is almost lost sight of, and it becomes more and more plain that those "outside the game laws" are sensible, decent men who refuse to submit to the silly dictates of the dueling code. But what I have thus named a fault is mostly theoretical, and does not mar the effective appeal of the play. What must appear as a more serious shortcoming from an American viewpoint is the local nature of the evil attacked, which lessens the universal validity of the work.

"Change Partners!" (*Reigen*) was produced about the same time as "Outside the Game Laws," but was not printed until 1900, and then only privately. Yet those ten dialogues provoked from the first a storm which seriously threatened Schnitzler's growing reputation and popularity. When Vienna finds a work immoral, one may look for something dreadful. And the work in question attempts a degree of naturalism rarely equaled in France even. Yet those dialogues are anything but immoral in spirit. They introduce ten men and as many women. The man of one scene reappears with a new woman in the next, and then that woman figures as the partner of a new man in the third scene. The story is always the same (except in the final dialogue): desire, satisfaction, indifference. The idea underlying this "ring dance," as the title means literally, is the same one that recurs under a much more attractive aspect in "Countess Mizzie." It is the linking together of the entire social organism by man's natural cravings. And as a document bearing on the psychology of sex "Change Partners!" has not many equals.

In "The Legacy" (*Das Vermächtnis*) we meet with a forcible presentation and searching discussion of the world's attitude toward those ties that have been established without social sanction. A young man is brought home dying, having been thrown from his horse. He compels his parents to send for his mistress and their little boy, and he hands both over to the care of his family. That is his "legacy." The family tries hard to rise to this unexpected situation and fails miserably — largely, it must be confessed, thanks to the caddish attitude of a self-made physician who wants to marry the dead man's sister. The second act ends with the death of the little boy; the third, with the disappearance and probable suicide of his mother. The dead man's sister cries out: "Everything that was his is sacred to us, but the one living being who meant more to him than all of us is driven out of our home." The one ray of light offered is that the sister sees through the man who has been courting her and sends him packing. It is noticeable in this play, as in others written by Schnitzler, that the attitude of the women is more sensible and tolerant than that of the men.

The physician is one of the few members of that profession whom the author has painted in an unfavorable light. There is hardly one full-length play of his in which at least one representative of the medical profession does not appear. And almost invariably they seem destined to act as the particular mouthpieces of the author. In a play like "The Lonely Way," for instance, the life shown is the life lived by men and women observed by Schnitzler. The opinions expressed are the opinions of that sort of men and women under the given circumstances. The author neither approves nor disapproves when he makes each character speak in accordance with his own nature. But like most creative artists, he has felt the need of stating his own view of the surrounding throng. This he seems usually to do through the mouth of men like *Dr. Reumann* in the play just mentioned, or *Dr. Mauer* in "The Vast Country." And the attitude of those men shows a strange mingling of disapproval and forbearance, which undoubtedly comes very near being Schnitzler's own.

The little one-act play "The Life Partner" (*Die Gefährtin*) is significant mainly as a study for bigger canvases developing the same theme: the veil that hides the true life of man and woman alike from the partner. And the play should really be named "The Life Partner That Was Not." Another one-act play, "The

Green Cockatoo," is laid at Paris. Its action takes place on the evening of July 14, 1789 — the fall of the Bastille and the birth of the Revolution. It presents a wonderful picture of social life at the time — of the average human being's unconsciousness of the great events taking place right under his nose.

"The Veil of Beatrice," a verse play in five acts, takes us to Bologna in the year 1500, when Cesare Borgia was preparing to invest the city in order to oust its tyrant, Giovanni Bentivoglio (named Lionardo in the play), and add it to the Papal possessions. All the acts take place in one night. The fundamental theme is one dear to Schnitzler — the flaming up of passion under the shadow of impending death. The whole city, with the duke leading, surrenders to this outburst, the spirit of which finds its symbol in a ravishingly beautiful girl, *Beatrice Nardi*, who seems fated to spread desire and death wherever she appears. With her own death at dawn, the city seems to wake as from a nightmare to face the enemy already at the gates. The play holds much that is beautiful and much that is disappointing. To me its chief importance lies in the fact that it marks a breaking-point between the period when Schnitzler was trying to write "with a purpose," and that later and greater period when he has learned how to treat life sincerely and seriously without other purpose than to present it as it is. That was his starting point in "Anatol," but then he was not yet ready for the realism that must be counted the highest of all: the realism that has no tendency and preaches no lesson, but from which we draw our own lessons as we draw them from life itself in moments of unusual lucidity.

"Hours of Life" (*Lebendige Stunden*), which has given its name to a volume of four one-act plays, may be described as a mental duel between two sharply opposed temperaments — the practical and the imaginative. An elderly woman, long an invalid, has just died, and a letter to the man who has loved and supported her during her final years reveals the fact that she has taken her own life because she feared that the thought of her was preventing her son, a poet, from working. The duel is between that son and the man who has befriended his mother. The play constitutes a scathing arraignment of the artistic temperament. Bernard Shaw himself has never penned a more bitter one. "Even if you were the world's greatest genius," the old man cries to the young one, "all your scribbling would be worthless in comparison with a single one of those hours of real life that saw your mother seated in that chair, talking to us, or merely listening, perhaps."

The most important of those four one-act plays, however, is "End of the Carnival" (*Die letzten Masken*). An old journalist, a might-have-been, dying in a hospital, sends for a life-long friend, a successful poet, whom he hates because of his success. All he thinks of is revenge, of getting even, and he means to achieve this end by disclosing to the poet the faithlessness of his wife. Once she had been the mistress of the dying man, and that seems to him his one triumph in life. But when the poet arrives and begins to talk of the commonplaces of daily life, of petty gossip, petty intrigues, and petty jealousies, then the dying man suddenly sees the futility of the whole thing. To him, who has one foot across the final threshold, it means nothing, and he lets his friend depart without having told him anything. There is a curious recurrence of the same basic idea in "Professor Bernhardi," where the central figure acquires a similar sense of our ordinary life's futility by spending two months in jail.

To what extent Schnitzler has studied and been impressed by Nietzsche I don't know, but the thought underlying "The Lady With the Dagger" is distinctly Nietzschean. It implies not only a sense of our having lived before, of having previously stood in the same relationship to the people now surrounding us, but of being compelled to repeat our past experience, even if a sudden flash of illumination out of the buried past should reveal to us its predestined fatal termination. This idea meets us again in the first act of "The Lonely Way." The fourth of those one-act plays, "Literature," is what Schnitzler has named it — a farce — but delightfully clever and satirical.

Those four plays, and the group of three others published under the common title of "Puppets"

(*Marionetten*), are, next to "Anatol," the best known works of Schnitzler's outside of Austria and Germany. They deserve their wide reputation, too, for there is nothing quite like them in the modern drama. Yet I think they have been over-estimated in comparison with the rest of Schnitzler's production. "The Puppet Player," "The Gallant Cassian" and "The Greatest Show of All" (*Zum grossen Wurstel*) have charm and brightness and wit. But in regard to actual significance they cannot compare with plays like "The Lonely Way," for instance.

The three plays comprised in the volume named "Puppets" constitute three more exemplifications of the artistic temperament, which again fares badly at the hands of their author. And yet he has more than one telling word to say in defense of that very temperament. That these plays, like "Hours of Life" and "Literature," are expressive of the inner conflict raging for years within the playwright's own soul, I take for granted. And they seem to reflect moments when Schnitzler felt that, in choosing poetry rather than medicine for his life work, he had sacrificed the better choice. And yet they do not show any regrets, but rather a slightly ironical self-pity. A note of irony runs through everything that Schnitzler has written, constituting one of the main attractions of his art, and it is the more acceptable because the point of it so often turns against the writer himself.

"The Puppet Player" is a poet who has ceased writing in order to use human beings for his material. He thinks that he is playing with their destinies as if they were so many puppets. And the little drama shows how his accidental interference has created fates stronger and happier than his own — fates lying wholly outside his power. The play suffers from a tendency to exaggerated subtlety which is one of Schnitzler's principal dangers, though it rarely asserts itself to such an extent that the enjoyment of his work is spoiled by it.

His self-irony reaches its climax in the one-act play which I have been forced to name "The Greatest Show of All" because the original title (*Zum grossen Wurstel*) becomes meaningless in English. There he proceeds with reckless abandon to ridicule his own work as well as the inflated importance of all imaginative creation. But to even up the score, he includes the public, as representative of ordinary humanity, among the objects of his sarcasms. And in the end all of us — poets, players, and spectators — are exposed as mere puppets. The same thought recurs to some extent in "The Gallant Cassian," which is otherwise a piece of sheer fun — the slightest of Schnitzler's dramatic productions, perhaps, but not without the accustomed Schnitzlerian sting.

When, after reading all the preceding plays, one reaches "The Lonely Way" (*Der einsame Weg*), it is hard to escape an impression of everything else having been nothing but a preparation. It is beyond all doubt Schnitzler's greatest and most powerful creation so far, representing a tremendous leap forward both in form and spirit. It has less passion than "The Call of Life," less subtlety than "Intermezzo," less tolerance than "Countess Mizzie." Instead it combines in perfect balance all the best qualities of those three plays — each dominant feature reduced a little to give the others scope as well. It is a wonderful specimen of what might be called the new realism — of that realism which is paying more attention to spiritual than to material actualities. Yet it is by no means lacking in the more superficial verisimilitude either. Its character-drawing and its whole atmosphere are startlingly faithful to life, even though the life portrayed may represent a clearly defined and limited phase of universal human existence.

The keynote of the play lies in *Sala's* words to *Julian* in the closing scene of the fourth act: "The process of aging must needs be a lonely one to our kind." That's the main theme — not a thesis to be proved. This loneliness to which *Sala* refers, is common to all people, but it is more particularly the share of those who, like himself and *Julian*, have treasured their "freedom" above everything else and who, for that reason, have eschewed the human ties which to a man like *Wegrath* represent life's greatest good and deepest meaning. Again we find the principal characters of the play typifying the artistic temperament, with its unhuman

disregards of the relationships that have primary importance to other men. Its gross egoism, as exemplified by *Julian*, is the object of passionate derision. And yet it is a man of that kind, *Sala*, who recognizes and points out the truer path, when he say: "To love is to live for somebody else."

The play has no thesis, as I have already said. It is not poised on the point of a single idea. Numerous subordinate themes are woven into the main one, giving the texture of the whole a richness resembling that of life itself. Woman's craving for experience and self-determination is one such theme, which we shall find again in "Intermezzo," where it practically becomes the dominant one.

Another one is that fascinated stare at death which is so characteristic of Latin and Slav writers — of men like Zola, Maupassant, and Tolstoy — while it is significantly absent in the great Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon poets. "Is there ever a blissful moment in any decent man's life, when he can think of anything but death in his innermost soul?" says *Sala*. The same thought is expressed in varying forms by one after another of Schnitzler's characters. "All sorrow is a lie as long as the open grave is not your own," cries the dying *Catharine* in "The Call of Life." It is in this connection particularly that we of the North must bear in mind Schnitzler's Viennese background and the Latin traditions forming such a conspicuous part of it. The Latin peoples have shown that they can die as bravely as the men of any other race or clime, but their attitude toward death in general is widely different from the attitude illustrated by Ibsen or Strindberg, for instance. A certain gloom, having kinship with death, seems ingrained in the Northern temperament, put there probably by the pressure of the Northern winter. The man of the sunlit South, on the other hand, seems always to retain the child's simple horror at the thought that darkness must follow light. We had better not regard it as cowardice under any circumstances, and cowardice it can certainly not be called in the characters of Schnitzler. But the resignation in which he finds his only antidote, and which seems to represent his nearest approach to a formulated philosophy, cannot be expected to satisfy us. One of his own countrymen, Hermann Bahr, has protested sharply against its insufficiency as a soul-sustaining faith, and in that protest I feel inclined to concur.

With "The Lonely Way" begins a series of plays representing not only Schnitzler's highest achievements so far, but a new note in the modern drama. To a greater extent than any other modern plays — not even excepting those of Ibsen — they must be defined as psychological. The dramas of Strindberg come nearest in this respect, but they, too, lag behind in soul-revealing quality. Plots are almost lacking in the Schnitzler productions during his later period. Things happen, to be sure, and these happenings are violent enough at times, but they do not constitute a sharply selected sequence of events leading up to a desired and foreshadowed end. In the further development of this period, even clearly defined themes are lost sight of, and the course of the play takes on an almost accidental aspect. This is puzzling, of course, and it must be especially provoking to those who expect each piece of art to have its narrow little lesson neatly tacked on in a spot where it cannot be missed. It implies a manner that exacts more alertness and greater insight on the part of the reader. But for that very reason these later plays of Schnitzler should prove stimulating to those who do not suffer from mental laziness or exhaustion.

"Intermezzo" (*Zwischenspiel*) might be interpreted as an attack on those new marital conventions which abolish the old-fashioned demand for mutual faithfulness and substitute mutual frankness. It would be more correct, however, to characterize it as a discussion of what constitutes true honesty in the ever delicate relationship between husband and wife. It shows, too, the growth of a woman's soul, once she has been forced to stand on her own feet. Viewed from this point, the play might very well be classified as feministic. It would be easy, for one thing, to read into it a plea for a single moral standard. But its ultimate bearing goes far beyond such a narrow construction. Here as elsewhere, Schnitzler shows himself more sympathetic toward

the female than toward the male outlook on life, and the creator of *Cecilia Adams-Ortenburg* may well be proclaimed one of the foremost living painters of the woman soul.

The man who, in "Anatol," saw nothing but a rather weak-minded restlessness in woman's inconstancy, recognizes in "Intermezzo" woman's right to as complete a knowledge of life and its possibilities as any man may acquire. The same note is struck by *Johanna* in "The Lonely Way." "I want a time to come when I must shudder at myself — shudder as deeply as you can only when nothing has been left untried," she says to *Sala* in the fourth act. This note sounds much more clearly — one might say defiantly — through the last two acts of "Intermezzo." And when *Amadeus*, shrinking from its implications, cries to *Cecilia* that thereafter she will be guarded by his tenderness, she retorts impatiently: "But I don't want to be guarded! I shall no longer permit you to guard me!" In strict keeping with it is also that Schnitzler here realizes and accepts woman's capacity for and right to creative expression. It is from *Cecilia's* lips that the suggestion comes to seek a remedy for life's hurts in a passionate abandonment to work. In fact, the established attitudes of man and woman seem almost reversed in the cases of *Amadeus* and *Cecilia.*

Significant as this play is from any point viewed, I am inclined to treasure it most on account of the subtlety and delicacy of its dialogue. I don't think any dramatist of modern times has surpassed Schnitzler in his ability to find expression for the most refined nuances of thought and feeling. To me, at least, it is a constant joy to watch the iridescence of his sentences, which gives to each of them not merely one, but innumerable meanings. And through so much of this particular play runs a spirit that can only be called playful — a spirit which finds its most typical expression in the delightful figure of *Albert Rhon*, the poet who takes the place of the otherwise inevitable physician. I like to think of that figure as more or less embodying the author's conception of himself. All the wit and sparkle with which we commonly credit the Gallic mind seems to me abundantly present in the scenes between *Albert* and *Amadeus*.

The poise and quiet characterizing "The Lonely Way" and "Intermezzo" appear lost to some extent in "The Call of Life" (*Der Ruf des Leben*), which, on the other hand, is one of the intensest plays written by Schnitzler. The white heat of its passion sears the mind at times, so that the reader feels like raising a shield between himself and the words. "It was as if I heard life itself calling to me outside my door," *Marie* says in this play when trying to explain to *Dr. Schindler* why she had killed her father and gone to seek her lover. The play might as well have been named "The Will to Live," provided we remember that mere existence can hardly be called life. Its basic thought has much in common with that of Frank Wedekind's "Earth Spirit," but Schnitzler spiritualizes what the German playwright has vulgarized. There is a lot of modern heresy in that thought — a lot of revived and refined paganism that stands in sharp opposition to the spirit of Christianity as it has been interpreted hitherto. It might be summarized as a twentieth century version of Achilles' declaration that he would rather be a live dog than the ruler of all the shades in Hades. "What a creature can I be," cries *Marie*, "to emerge out of such an experience as out of a bad dream — awake — and living — and wanting to live?" And the kind, wise, Schnitzlerian doctor's answer is: "You are alive — and the rest *has been*...." Life itself is its own warrant and explanation. Unimpaired life — life with the power and will to go on living — is the greatest boon and best remedy of any that can be offered.

The weak point of "The Call to Life" is *Marie's* father, the old *Moser* — one of the most repulsive figures ever seen on the stage. It may have been made what it is in order that the girl's crime might not hopelessly prejudice the spectator at the start and thus render all the rest of the play futile. We must remember, too, that the monstrous egoism of *Moser* is not represented as a typical quality of that old age which feels itself robbed by the advance of triumphant youth. What Schnitzler shows is that egoism grows more repulsive as increasing age makes it less warranted. The middle act of the play, with its remarkable conversation between

the *Colonel* and *Max*, brings us back to "Outside the Game Laws." That earlier play was in its time declared the best existing stage presentation of the spirit engendered by the military life. But it has a close second in "The Call of Life." To anyone having watched the manners of militarism in Europe, the words of the *Colonel* to *Max* will sound as an all-sufficient explanation: "No physicians have to spend thirty years at the side of beds containing puppets instead of human patients — no lawyers have to practice on criminals made out of pasteboard — and even the ministers are not infrequently preaching to people who actually believe in heaven and hell."

If "The Lonely Way" be Schnitzler's greatest play all around, and "Intermezzo" his subtlest, "Countess Mizzie" is the sweetest, the best tempered, the one that leaves the most agreeable taste in the mouth. It gives us a concrete embodiment of the tolerance toward all life that is merely suggested by the closing sentences of *Dr. Schindler* in the last act of "The Call of Life." It brings back the gay spirit of "Anatol," but with a rare maturity supporting it. The simple socio-biological philosophy of "Change Partners!" is restated without the needless naturalism of those early dialogues. The idea of "Countess Mizzie" is that, if we look deep enough, all social distinctions are lost in a universal human kinship. On the surface we appear like flowers neatly arranged in a bed, each kind in its separate and carefully labeled corner. Then Schnitzler begins to scrape off the screening earth, and underneath we find the roots of all those flowers intertwined and matted, so that it is impossible to tell which belong to the *Count* and which to *Wasner*, the coachman, which to *Miss Lolo*, the ballet-dancer, and which to the *Countess*.

"Young Medardus" is Schnitzler's most ambitious attempt at historical playwriting. It seems to indicate that he belongs too wholly in the present age to succeed in that direction. The play takes us back to 1809, when Napoleon appeared a second time outside the gates of Vienna. The central character, *Medardus Klähr*, is said to be historical. The re-created atmosphere of old Vienna is at once convincing and amusing. But the play is too sprawling, too scattered, to get firm hold on the reader. There are seventy-four specifically indicated characters, not to mention groups of dumb figures. And while the title page speaks of five acts and a prologue, there are in reality seventeen distinct scenes. Each scene may be dramatically valuable, but the constant passage from place to place, from one set of characters to another, has a confusing effect.

There is, too, a more deep-lying reason for the failure of the play as a whole, I think. The ironical outlook so dear to Schnitzler — or rather, so inseparable from his temperament — has betrayed him. Irony seems hopelessly out of place in a historical drama, where it tends to make us feel that the author does not believe in the actual existence of his own characters. I have a suspicion that "Young Medardus" takes the place within the production of Schnitzler that is held by "Peer Gynt" in the production of Ibsen — that *Medardus Klähr* is meant to satirize the Viennese character as *Peer Gynt* satirizes the Norwegian.

The keynote of the play may be found in the words of *Etzelt*, spoken as *Medardus* is about to be shot, after having refused to save his own life by a promise not to make any attempts against Napoleon's: "God wanted to make a hero of him, and the course of events turned him into a fool." The obvious interpretation is that the pettiness of Viennese conditions defeated the larger aspirations of the man, who would have proved true to his own possibilities in other surroundings. A more careful analysis of the plot shows, however, that what turns the ambitions of *Medardus* into dreams and words is his susceptibility to the charms of a woman. Once within the magic circle of her power, everything else — the danger of his country, the death of his sister, his duty to avenge the death of his father — becomes secondary to his passion. And each time he tries to rise above that passion, the reappearance of the woman is sufficient to deflect him from his purpose. It is as if Schnitzler wanted to suggest that the greatest weakness of the Viennese character lies in its sensuous concern with sex to the detriment of all other vital interests. To me it is a very remarkable thing to think that such a

play was performed a large number of times at one of the foremost theaters in Vienna, and that, apparently, it received a very respectful hearing. I cannot but wonder what would happen here, if a play were put on the stage dealing in a similar spirit with the American character.

"The soul is a vast country, where many different things find place side by side," says Dr. Theodor Reik in his interesting volume named "Arthur Schnitzler als Psycholog" (Minden, 1913). Thus he explains the meaning of the title given to "The Vast Country" (*Das Weite Land*). And I don't think it is possible to get closer than that. Nowhere has Schnitzler been more casual in his use of what is commonly called plot. Nowhere has he scorned more completely to build his work around any particular "red thread." Event follows event with seeming haphazardness. The only thing that keeps the play from falling apart is the logical development of each character. It is, in fact, principally, if not exclusively, a series of soul-studies. What happens serves merely as an excuse to reveal the reaction of a certain character to certain external pressures or internal promptings. But viewed in this light, the play has tremendous power and significance.

Dr. Reik's book, to which I just referred, has been written to prove the direct connection between Schnitzler's art and the new psychology established by Dr. Sigmund Freud of Vienna. That the playwright must have studied the Freudian theories seems more than probable. That they may have influenced him seems also probable. And that this influence may have helped him to a clearer grasp of more than one mystery within the human soul, I am willing to grant also. What I want to protest against, is the attempt to make him out an exponent of any particular scientific theory. He is an observer of all life. He is what *Amadeus* in "Intermezzo" ironically charges *Albert Rhon* with being: "a student of the human soul." And he has undoubtedly availed himself of every new aid that might be offered for the analysis and interpretation of that soul. The importance of man's sub-conscious life seems to have been clear to him in the early days of "Anatol," and it seems to have grown on him as he matured. Another Freudian conception he has also made his own — that of the close connection between man's sexual life and vital phenomena not clearly designed for the expression of that life. But — to return to the point I have already tried to make — it would be dangerous and unjust to read any work of his as the dramatic effort of a scientific theorizer.

Schnitzler is of Jewish race. In Vienna that means a great deal more than in London, Stockholm or New York. It means an atmosphere of contempt, of suspicion, of hatred. It means frequently complete isolation, and always some isolation. It means a constant sense of conflict between oneself and one's surroundings. All these things are reflected in the works of Schnitzler — more particularly the sense of conflict and of isolation. Life itself is blamed for it most of the time, however, and it is only once in a great while that the specific and localized cause is referred to — as in "Literature," for instance. And even when Schnitzler undertakes, as he has done in his latest play, "Professor Bernhardi," to deal directly with the situation of the Jew within a community with strong anti-Semitic tendencies, he does not appear able to keep his mind fixed on that particular issue. He starts to discuss it, and does so with a clearness and fairness that have not been equaled since the days of Lessing — and then he drifts off in a new direction. The mutual opposition between Jews and Catholics becomes an opposition between the skeptical and the mystical temperaments. It is as if he wanted to say that all differences are unreal except those between individuals as such. And if that be his intention, he is right, I believe, and his play is the greater for bringing that thought home to us.

The play is a remarkable one in many respects. It deals largely with the internal affairs of a hospital. An overwhelming majority of the characters are physicians connected with the big hospital of which *Professor Bernhardi* is the head. They talk of nothing but what men of that profession in such a position would be likely to talk of. In other words, they are all the time "talking shop." This goes on through five acts. Throughout the entire play there is not the slightest suggestion of what the Broadway manager and the periodical editor call a

“love interest.” And yet the play holds you from beginning to end, and the dramatic tension could not be greater if its main theme were the unrequited love of the professor’s son instead of his own right to place his duties as a physician above all other considerations. To one who has grown soul-weary of the “triangle” and all other combinations for the exploiting of illicit or legitimized love, “Professor Bernhardi” should come as a great relief and a bright promise.

These are the main outlines of Schnitzler’s work as a dramatist. They indicate a constant, steady growth, coupled with increased realization of his own possibilities and powers as well as of his limitations. In all but a very few of his plays, he has confined himself to the life immediately surrounding him — to the life of the Viennese middle class, and more particularly of the professional element to which he himself belongs. But on the basis of a wonderfully faithful portrayal of local characters and conditions, he has managed to rear a superstructure of emotional appeal and intellectual clarification that must render his work welcome to thinking men and women wherever it be introduced. And as he is still in the flower of his manhood, it seems reasonable to expect that still greater things may be forthcoming from his pen.

SCHNITZLER’S “ANATOL”

Spearhead fences, yew-tree hedges,
Coats of arms no more regilded,
Sphinxes gleaming through the thickets....
Creakingly the gates swing open.
With its tritons sunk in slumber,
And its fountains also sleeping,
Mildewed, lovely, and rococo,
Lo... Vienna, Canaletto’s,
Dated Seventeen and Sixty.
Quiet pools of green-brown waters,
Smooth and framed in snow-white marble,
Show between their mirrored statues
Gold and silver fishes playing.
Slender stems of oleander
Cast their prim array of shadows
On the primly close-cropped greensward.
Overhead, the arching branches
Meet and twine to sheltering niches,
Where are grouped in loving couples
Stiff-limbed heroines and heroes....
Dolphins three pour splashing streamlets
In three shell-shaped marble basins.
Chestnut blossoms, richly fragrant,
Fall like flames and flutter downward
To be drowned within the basins....
Music, made by clarinettes and
Violins behind the yew-trees,
Seems to come from graceful cupids
Playing on the balustrade, or

Weaving flowers into garlands,
While beside them other flowers
Gayly stream from marble vases:
Jasmin, marigold, and elder....
On the balustrade sit also
Sweet coquettes among the cupids,
And some messeigneurs in purple.
At their feet, on pillows resting,
Or reclining on the greensward,
May be seen abbés and gallants.
From perfumed sedans are lifted
Other ladies by their lovers....
Rays of light sift through the leafage,
Shed on golden curls their luster,
Break in flames on gaudy cushions,
Gleam alike on grass and gravel,
Sparkle on the simple structure
We have raised to serve the moment.
Vines and creepers clamber upward,
Covering the slender woodwork,
While between them are suspended
Gorgeous tapestries and curtains:
Scenes Arcadian boldly woven,
Charmingly designed by Watteau....
In the place of stage, an arbor;
Summer sun in place of footlights;
Thus we rear Thalia's temple
Where we play our private dramas,
Gentle, saddening, precocious....
Comedies that we have suffered;
Feelings drawn from past and present;
Evil masked in pretty phrases;
Soothing words and luring pictures;
Subtle stirrings, mere nuances,
Agonies, adventures, crises....
Some are listening, some are yawning,
Some are dreaming, some are laughing,
Some are sipping ices... others
Whisper longings soft and languid....
Nodding in the breeze, carnations,
Long-stemmed white carnations, image
Butterflies that swarm in sunlight,
While a black and long-haired spaniel
Barks astonished at a peacock....
Hugo von Hofmannsthal,
(*Edwin Björkman.*)

PERSONS



Professor Wegrat, President of the Academy of Plastic Arts
Gabrielle, His wife
Their children: Felix and Johanna
Johanna
Julian Fichtner
Stephan von Sala
Irene Herms
Dr. Franz Reumann, A physician
Fichtner's Valet
Sala's Valet
A Maid at the Wegrats'

THE FIRST ACT



The little garden attached to Professor Wegrat's house. It is almost surrounded by buildings, so that no outlook of any kind is to be had. At the right in the garden stands the small two-storied house with its woodwork veranda, to which lead three wooden steps. Entries are made from the veranda as well as from either side of the house. Near the middle of the stage is a green garden table with chairs to match, and also a more comfortable armchair. A small iron bench is placed against a tree at the left.
Johanna is walking back and forth in the garden when Felix enters, wearing the uniform of a uhlan.

JOHANNA (*turning about*)
Felix!

FELIX
Yes, it's me.

JOHANNA
How are you? — And how have you been able to get another furlough?

FELIX
Oh, it won't last long. — And how's mamma?

JOHANNA
Doing pretty well the last few days.

FELIX
Do you think she would be scared if I dropped in on her unexpectedly?

JOHANNA
No. But wait a little just the same. She's asleep now. I have just come from her room. — How long are you going to stay, Felix?

FELIX
To-morrow night I'm off again.

JOHANNA (*staring into a fancied distance*)
Off....

FELIX
Oh, it sounds big! But one doesn't get so very far off — not in any respect.

JOHANNA
And you have wanted it so badly.... (*Pointing to his uniform*) Now you've got it. And are you not satisfied?

FELIX
Well, at any rate it is the most sensible thing I have gone into so far. For now I feel at least that I might

achieve something under certain circumstances.

JOHANNA
I believe you would make good in any profession.

FELIX
I have my doubts whether I could get anywhere as a lawyer or an engineer. And on the whole I feel a good deal better than ever before. Often it seems to me as if I hadn't been born at the right time. I think I should have come into the world while there was still so much of order left in it, that one could venture all sorts of things one couldn't possibly venture nowadays.

JOHANNA
Oh, but you are free — you've got place to move.

FELIX
Only within certain limits.

JOHANNA
They are a great deal wider than these at any rate.

FELIX (*looking around with a smile*)
Well, this is not a prison.... Really, the garden has turned out quite pretty. How bare it looked when we were children. — What's that? A row of peach trees? That doesn't look bad at all.

JOHANNA
One of Dr. Reumann's ideas.

FELIX
Yes, I should have guessed it.

JOHANNA
Why?

FELIX
Because I can't believe any member of our family capable of such a useful inspiration. What are his chances anyhow? — I mean in regard to that professorship at Gratz?

JOHANNA
I don't know anything about it. (*She turns away*)

FELIX
I suppose mamma is outdoors a good deal these fine days?

JOHANNA
Yes.

FELIX

Are you still reading to her? Do you try to divert her a little? To cheer her up?

JOHANNA
Just as if it were such an easy thing!

FELIX
But you have to put some spunk into it, Johanna.

JOHANNA
Yes, Felix, it's easy for you to talk.

FELIX
What do you mean?

JOHANNA (*speaking as if to herself*)

I don't know if you'll be able to understand me.

FELIX (*smiling*)
Why should it all at once be so hard for me to understand you?

JOHANNA (*looking calmly at him*)
Now when she is sick, I don't love her as much as before.

FELIX (*startled*)
What?

JOHANNA
No, it's impossible that you could quite understand. All the time she is getting farther away from us.... It is as if every day a new set of veils dropped down about her.

FELIX
And what is the meaning of it?

JOHANNA (*continues to look at him in the same calm way*)

FELIX
You think...?

JOHANNA
You know, Felix, that I never make any mistakes in things of that kind.

FELIX
I *know*, you say...?

JOHANNA
When poor little Lillie von Sala had to die, I was aware of it in advance — before the rest of you knew that she was sick even.

FELIX
Yes, you had had a dream — and you were nothing but a child.

JOHANNA
I didn't dream it. I knew it. (*Brusquely*) It's something I can't explain.

FELIX (*after a pause*)
And papa — has he resigned himself to it?

JOHANNA
Resigned himself? — Do you think he too can see those veils coming down?

FELIX (*having first shaken his head slightly*)
Nothing but imagination, Johanna — I am sure. — But now I want to.... (*Turning toward the house*) Papa hasn't come home yet?

JOHANNA
No. As a rule he's very late these days. He has an awful lot to do in the Academy.

FELIX
I'll try not to wake her up — I'll be careful. (*He goes out by way of the veranda*)
[*While alone for a while, Johanna seats herself on the garden bench with her hands clasped across her knees. Sala enters. He is forty-five, but looks younger. Slender to the verge of leanness, and smooth-shaven. His brown hair, which has begun to turn gray at the temples, and which he wears rather long, is parted on the right side. His features are keen and energetic; his eyes, gray and clear.*

SALA
Good evening, Miss Johanna.

JOHANNA
Good evening, Mr. von Sala.

SALA
They told me your mother was having a little nap, and so I permitted myself to come out here in the meantime.

JOHANNA
Felix just got here.

SALA
Well? Have they already granted him another furlough? In my days they were stricter in that regiment. However, we were then stationed near the border — somewhere in Galicia.

JOHANNA
I can never keep in mind that you have gone through that kind of thing too.

SALA

Yes, it's long ago now. And it didn't last more than a couple of years. But it was good fun as I look back at it now.

JOHANNA
Like almost everything else you have experienced.

SALA
Like much of it.

JOHANNA
Won't you sit down?

SALA
Thank you. (*He seats himself on the support of the armchair*) Am I permitted? (*Johanna having nodded assent, he takes a cigarette from his case and lights it*)

JOHANNA
Are you already settled in your new place, Mr. von Sala?

SALA
I move in to-morrow.

JOHANNA
And it gives you a great deal of pleasure, doesn't it?

SALA
That would be a little premature.

JOHANNA
Are you superstitious?

SALA
Well, for that matter — yes. — But that was not what I had in mind. I only take possession temporarily, not for good.

JOHANNA
Why not?

SALA
I'm going abroad — for a prolonged stay.

JOHANNA
Oh? You are to be envied. I wish I could do the same — go here and there in the world, and not bother myself about a single human being.

SALA
Still at it?

JOHANNA
Still at it.... What do you mean?

SALA
Oh, I recall how the same kind of schemes for traveling used to occupy your mind when you were nothing but a little girl. What was it you wanted to become? — A ballet dancer, I think. Wasn't that it? A very famous one, of course.

JOHANNA
Why do you say that as if it were nothing at all to be a ballet dancer? (*Without looking at him*) You, in particular, Mr. von Sala, should not be talking like that.

SALA
Why not I, in particular?

JOHANNA (*glances up calmly at him*)

SALA
I don't quite make out what you mean, Miss Johanna.... Unless I must.... (*Simply*) Johanna, did you know at the time that I was looking at you?

JOHANNA
When?

SALA
Last year, when you were in the country, and I came out once and stayed over night in your attic. It was bright moonlight, and I thought I could see a fairy gliding back and forth in the meadow.

JOHANNA (*nods with a smile*)

SALA
And it was for me?

JOHANNA
Oh, I saw you very well, where you stood behind the curtain.

SALA (*after a brief pause*)

I suppose you will never dance like that for other people?

JOHANNA
Why not? — I have already. And then, too, you were looking on. Of course, it was a good while ago. — It happened on one of the Greek islands. A large number of men stood in a circle around me... you were one of them... and I was a slave girl from Lydia.

SALA
A princess in captivity.

JOHANNA (*earnestly*)
Don't you believe in such things?

SALA
If you want me to — certainly.

JOHANNA (*still very serious*)
You should believe everything in which the rest cannot believe.

SALA
When the time comes for it, I suppose I shall.

JOHANNA
You see — I can rather believe anything than that I should now be in the world for the first time. And there are moments when I recall quite clearly all sorts of things.

SALA
And at that time you had such a moment?

JOHANNA
Yes, a year ago, when I was dancing for you in the meadow that moonlit summer night. I am sure it was not the first time, Mr. von Sala. (*After a short pause, with a sudden change of tone*) Where are you going anyhow?

SALA (*falling into the same tone*)
To Bactria, Miss Johanna.

JOHANNA
Where?

SALA
To Bactria. That's quite a remarkable country, and what's most remarkable about it is that it doesn't exist any longer. What it means is that I am joining an expedition which will start next November. You have read of it in the papers, haven't you?

JOHANNA
No.

SALA
The proposition is to make excavations where it is supposed the ancient Ecbatana stood once — some six thousand years ago. That goes even farther back than your Lydian period, you see.

JOHANNA
When did you get hold of this idea?

SALA
Only a few days ago. Conversationally, so to speak. Count Ronsky, who is at the head of the matter, inspired

me with a great desire to go. That wasn't very hard, however. He stirred an old longing within me. (*With more spirit*) Think of it, Miss Johanna: to be watching with your own eyes the gradual rising of such a buried city out of the ground — house by house, stone by stone, century by century. No, it wasn't meant that I should pass away until I had had this wish of mine fulfilled.

JOHANNA
Why talk of dying then?

SALA
Is there ever a blissful moment in any decent man's life when he can think of anything else in his innermost soul?

JOHANNA
I don't suppose a single wish of yours was ever left unfulfilled.

SALA
Not a single one...?

JOHANNA
I know that you have also had many sad experiences. But frequently I believe you have longed for those too.

SALA
Longed for them...? You may be right, perhaps, in saying that I enjoyed them when they came.

JOHANNA
How perfectly I understand that! A life without sorrow would probably be as bare as a life without happiness. (*Pause*) How long ago is it now?

SALA
What are you thinking of?

JOHANNA
That Mrs. von Sala died?

SALA
It's seven years ago, almost to a day.

JOHANNA
And Lillie — the same year?

SALA
Yes, Lillie died a month later. Do you often think of Lillie, Miss Johanna?

JOHANNA
Quite often, Mr. von Sala. I have never had a girl friend since that time. (*As if to herself*) She too would have to be called "miss" now. She was very pretty. She had black hair with a bluish glint in it like your wife, and the same clear eyes that you have, Mr. von Sala. (*As if to herself*) "Then both of them walked hand in hand

along the gloomy road that leads through sunlit land....”

SALA
What a memory you have, Johanna.

JOHANNA
Seven years ago that was.... Remarkable!

SALA
Why remarkable?

JOHANNA
You are building a house, and digging out submerged cities, and writing queer poetry — and human beings who once meant so much to you have been rotting in their graves these seven years — and you are still almost young. How incomprehensible the whole thing is!

SALA
“Thou that livest on, cease thou thy weeping,” says Omar Nameh, who was born at Bagdad in the year 412 of the Mohammedan era as the son of a cobbler. For that matter, I know a man who is only thirty-eight. He has buried two wives and seven children, not to speak of grandchildren. And now he is playing the piano in a shabby little Prater restaurant, while artists of both sexes show off their tights and their fluttering skirts on the platform. And recently, when the pitiful performance had come to an end and they were turning out the lights, he went right on, without apparent reason, and quite heedless of everything, playing away on that frightful old rattle-box of his. And then Ronsky and I asked him over to our table and had a chat with him. And then he told us that the piece he had just played was his own composition. Of course, we complimented him. And then his eyes lit up, and he asked us in a voice that shook: “Gentlemen, do you think my piece will make a hit?” He is thirty-eight years old, and his career has come to an end in a small restaurant where his public consists of nurse-girls and non-commissioned officers, and his one longing is — to get their applause!

REUMANN (*enters*)
Good evening, Miss Johanna. Good evening, Mr. von Sala. (*Shakes hands with both of them at the same time*) How are you?

SALA
Fine. You don’t suppose one must be your victim all the time because one has had the honor of consulting you once?

REUMANN
Oh, I had forgotten all about it. However, there are people who feel just that way. — I suppose your mother is having a little rest, Miss Johanna?

JOHANNA (*who apparently has been startled by the few words exchanged between the physician and Sala, and who is looking intently at the latter*) She is probably awake by this time. Felix is with her.

REUMANN
Felix...? You haven’t telegraphed for him, have you?

JOHANNA
Not that I know of. Who could have...?

REUMANN
I only wondered. Your father is inclined to get frightened.

JOHANNA
There they are now.

MRS. WEGRAT (*enters from the veranda with Felix*)
How are you, my dear Doctor? What do you think of the surprise I have just had?
[*All the men shake hands.*

MRS. WEGRAT
Good evening, Mr. von Sala.

SALA
I am delighted to see you looking so well, Mrs. Wegrat.

MRS. WEGRAT
Yes, I am doing a little better. If only the gloomy season were not so close at hand.

SALA
But now the finest time of the year is coming. When the woods sparkle with red and yellow, and a golden mist lies on the hills, and the sky grows pale and remote as if it were scared by its own infinity...!

MRS. WEGRAT
Yes, that ought to be worth seeing once more.

REUMANN (*reproachfully*)
Mrs. Wegrat....

MRS. WEGRAT
Pardon me — but thoughts of that kind will come. (*Brightening up a little*) If I only knew how much longer I might count on my dear doctor?

REUMANN
I can reassure you on that score, madam: I shall stay in Vienna.

MRS. WEGRAT
What? Has the matter been settled already?

REUMANN
Yes.

MRS. WEGRAT
So another man has actually been called to Gratz?

REUMANN
No, not that way. But the other man, who was practically sure of the place, has broken his neck climbing a mountain.

FELIX
But then your chances should be better than ever. Whom could they possibly consider besides you?

REUMANN
I suppose my chances wouldn't be bad. But I have preferred to forgo them.

MRS. WEGRAT
How?

REUMANN
I won't accept the call.

MRS. WEGRAT
Is that out of superstition?

FELIX
Or out of pride?

REUMANN
Neither. But the thought of having another man's misfortune to thank for my own advancement would be extremely painful to me. Half my life would be spoiled for me. That is neither superstition nor pride, you see, but just commonplace, small-minded vanity.

SALA
You're a subtle one, Doctor.

MRS. WEGRAT
Well, all I gather is that you are going to stay. Which shows how mean your thoughts grow when you are sick.

REUMANN (*changing the subject on purpose*)
Well, Felix, how do you find life in a garrison?

FELIX
Fine.

MRS. WEGRAT
So you are really satisfied, boy?

FELIX
I feel very thankful to all of you. Especially to you, mamma.

MRS. WEGRAT

Why to me especially? After all, the decision lay with your father in the last instance.

REUMANN
He would, of course, have preferred to see you choose a more peaceful calling.

SALA
Oh, but to-day there is none more peaceful.

FELIX
That's where you are right, Mr. von Sala. — By the by, I was to give you the regards of Lieutenant-Colonel Schrotting.

SALA
Thank you. Does he still remember me?

FELIX
Not he alone. We are constantly being reminded of you — at every meal, in fact. Yours is among the pictures of former officers that hang in the mess rooms.

WEGRAT (*enters*)
Good evening. — Why, Felix, are you here again? What a surprise!

FELIX
Good evening, papa. I have applied for a two-day furlough.

WEGRAT
Furlough... furlough? A real one? Or is it another one of those little brilliant tricks?

FELIX (*cheerfully and without taking offence*)

I am not in the habit of fibbing, papa, am I?

WEGRAT (*in the same tone*)

I meant no offense, my boy. Even if you had been guilty of deserting the flag, your longing to see your mother would be sufficient excuse for you.

MRS. WEGRAT
To see his parents, you mean.

WEGRAT
Of course — to see us all. But as you are a little under the weather, you come foremost just now. — Well, how are you getting along, Gabrielle? Better, are you not? (*In a low voice, almost timidly*) My love.... (*He strokes her brow and hair*) Love.... The air is so mild.

SALA
We are having a wonderful Autumn.

REUMANN
Have you just got away from the Academy, Professor?

WEGRAT
Yes. Now, when I am also the president of it, there is a whole lot to do — and all of it is not pleasant or grateful. But I seem to be made for it, as they have insisted. And I suppose it will have to go on this way. (*With a smile*) As somebody once called me — an art-official.

SALA
Don't be so unjust to yourself, Professor.

MRS. WEGRAT
You must have been walking all that long way home again?

WEGRAT
I even went out of my way some distance — to pass across the old Turkish fort. I am awfully fond of that road. On evenings like this the whole city lies beneath you as if bathed in a silvery mist. — By the by, Gabrielle, I have some greetings to deliver. I met Irene Herms.

MRS. WEGRAT
Is she in Vienna?

WEGRAT
Just passing through. She intends to call on you.

SALA
Has she still got an engagement at Hamburg?

WEGRAT
No, she has left the stage, she told me, and is now living in the country with her married sister.

JOHANNA
I saw her once in a play of yours, Mr. von Sala.

SALA
Then you must have been a very small girl indeed.

JOHANNA
She played a Spanish princess.

SALA
Unfortunately. For princesses were not at all in her line. She has never in her life been able to treat verse properly.

REUMANN
And you can still bear that in mind, Mr. von Sala — that some lady on some occasion happened to handle your verse badly?

SALA
Well, why shouldn't I, my dear Doctor? If you were living at the center of the earth, you would know that all things are of equal weight. And were you floating in the center of the universe, you would suspect that all things are of equal importance.

MRS. WEGRAT
How does she look anyhow?

WEGRAT
She is still very pretty.

SALA
Has she preserved her resemblance to that portrait of hers which is hanging in the Museum?

FELIX
What portrait is that?

JOHANNA
Is her portrait really in the Museum?

SALA
Oh, you know it. In the catalogue it is labeled "Actress" — just "Actress." A young woman in the costume of a harlequin, over which she has draped a Greek toga, while at her feet lie a confused heap of masks. With her staring glance turned toward the spectators, she stands there all alone on an empty, dusky stage, surrounded by odd pieces of misfit scenery — one wall of a room, a forest piece, part of an old dungeon....

FELIX
And the background shows a southern landscape with palms and plane trees...?

SALA
Yes, and it is partly raised so that still farther off you can see a pile of furniture, steps, goblets, chandeliers — all glittering in full daylight.

FELIX
But that's Julian Fichtner's picture?

SALA
Exactly.

FELIX
I had not the slightest idea that the figure of that woman was meant for Irene Herms.

WEGRAT
Twenty-five years have passed since he painted that picture. It caused a tremendous sensation at the time. It was his first big success. And to-day I suppose there are lots of people who no longer remember his name. — Come to think of it, I asked Irene Herms about him. But strange to say, not even his "perennial best girl" could tell where in this world he happens to be straying.

FELIX
I talked with him only a few days ago.

WEGRAT
What? You have seen Julian Fichtner? He was in Salzburg? — When?

FELIX
Only about three or four days ago. He looked me up, and we spent the evening together.
[*Mrs. Wegrat throws a quick glance at Dr. Reumann.*

WEGRAT
How is he doing? What did he tell you?

FELIX
He has turned rather gray, but otherwise he didn't seem to have changed at all.

WEGRAT
How long can it be now since he left Vienna? Two years, isn't it?

MRS. WEGRAT
A little more.

FELIX
He has traveled far and wide.

SALA
Yes, now and then I have had a postcard from him.

WEGRAT
So have we. But I thought you and he were corresponding regularly.

SALA
Regularly? Oh, no.

JOHANNA
Isn't he a friend of yours?

SALA
As a rule I have no friends. And if I have any, I repudiate them.

JOHANNA
But you used to be quite intimate with him.

SALA
He with me rather than I with him.

FELIX
What do you mean by that, Mr. von Sala?

JOHANNA
Oh, I can understand it. I suppose you have had the same experience with most people.

SALA
Something very much like it, at least.

JOHANNA
Yes, one can see it from what you write, too.

SALA
I hope so. Otherwise it might just as well have been written by somebody else.

WEGRAT
Did he say when he would be back in Vienna?

FELIX
Soon, I think. But he didn't say very definitely.

JOHANNA
I should like to see Mr. Fichtner again. I am fond of that kind of people.

WEGRAT
What do you mean by "that kind of people"?

JOHANNA
Who are always arriving from some far-off place.

WEGRAT
But as a rule he never arrived from far-off places when you knew him, Johanna.... He was living right here.

JOHANNA
What did it matter whether he was living here or elsewhere? — Even when he came to see us daily, it was always as if he had just arrived from some great distance.

WEGRAT
Oh, of course....

FELIX
I had often the same feeling.

WEGRAT
Well, it's strange how he has been knocking about in the world — these last few years at least.

SALA
Don't you think his restlessness goes farther back? Were you not students together in the Academy?

WEGRAT
Yes. And to know him properly, you must have known him then. There was something fascinating about him

as a young man, something that dazzled. Never have I known anybody whom the term “of great promise” fitted so completely.

SALA
Well, he has kept a whole lot of it.

WEGRAT
But think of all he might have achieved!

REUMANN
I believe that what you might achieve you do achieve.

WEGRAT
Not always. Julian was undoubtedly destined for higher things. What he lacked was the capacity for concentration, the inward calm. He could never feel at home for good anywhere. And the misfortune has been that in his own works, too, he has lived only as a transient, so to speak.

FELIX
He showed me a couple of sketches he had made recently.

WEGRAT
Good?

FELIX
To me there was something gripping about them.

MRS. WEGRAT
Why gripping? What kind of pictures were they?

FELIX
Landscapes. And as a rule very pleasant ones at that.

JOHANNA
Once in a dream I saw a Spring landscape, very sunlit and soft, and yet it made me weep.

SALA
Yes, the sadness of certain things lies much deeper than we commonly suspect.

WEGRAT
So he’s working again? Then, perhaps, we may expect something out of the ordinary.

SALA
In the case of anybody who has been an artist once you are never safe against surprises.

WEGRAT
That’s it, Mr. von Sala. That’s where the great difference lies. In the case of an official you can feel perfectly safe on that score. (*With cheerful self-contempt*) Such a one paints every year his nice little picture for the

exhibition, and couldn't possibly do anything else.

REUMANN
It is still open to question who do most for the advancement of life and art: officials like you, Professor, or — our so-called men of genius.

WEGRAT
Oh, I have not the least intention to play the modest one. But as to men of genius — we had better not talk of them at all. There you are dealing with a world by itself, lying outside of all discussion — as do the elements.

REUMANN
My opinion, I must confess, is utterly different.

WEGRAT
Oh, it's of no use discussing anybody but those who have distinct limitations. And what I have found is — that he who knows his own limitations best is the better man. And on this point I have pretty good reason for self-respect. — Do you feel chilly, Gabrielle?

MRS. WEGRAT
No.

WEGRAT
But you had better pull the shawl a little closer about you, and then we should have a little exercise — in so far as it's possible in here.

MRS. WEGRAT
All right. — Please, Doctor, give me your arm. You haven't paid the least attention to your patient yet.

REUMANN
At your service!
[*The rest start ahead, Johanna walking with her brother, and Wegrat with Sala. Dr. Reumann and Mrs. Wegrat seem about to follow, when she suddenly stops.*

MRS. WEGRAT
Did you notice his eyes light up — I mean, the eyes of Felix, when they were talking of *him?* It was most peculiar.

REUMANN
Men of Mr. Fichtner's type appear undoubtedly very interesting to young people. They seem to carry with them an odor of romance.

MRS. WEGRAT (*shaking her head*)
And he looked him up.... It is perfectly clear that he went to Salzburg just to see him again. I suppose he is beginning to feel a little deserted.

REUMANN
Why not pay a visit to a young friend when one happens to be near the place where he is living? I can see

nothing peculiar in that.

MRS. WEGRAT
Perhaps you are right. Perhaps I might have looked at the matter in the same way not long ago. But now, in the face of.... No, Doctor, I am not going to be sentimental.

REUMANN
I don't object to sentiment, but to nonsense.

MRS. WEGRAT (*smiling*)
Thank you. — However, I have occasion to think of many different things. And it is no reason for taking it too seriously, my dear friend. You know, of course, that I told you everything merely that I might have a kind and sensible man with whom to discuss the past — and not at all to be absolved of any guilt.

REUMANN
To give happiness is more than being free of guilt. And as this has been granted you, it is clear that you have made full atonement — if you'll pardon the use of such a preposterously extravagant term.

MRS. WEGRAT
How can you talk like that?

REUMANN
Well, am I not right?

MRS. WEGRAT
Just as if I couldn't feel how all of us, deceivers and deceived, must seem equally contemptible to you in particular!

REUMANN
Why to me in particular...? What you call contempt, madam — supposing I did feel anything like it — would, after all, be nothing but disguised envy. Or do you think I lack the desire to conduct my life as I see most other people conducting theirs? I simply haven't the knack. If I am to be frank, madam — the deepest yearning of all within me is just to be a rogue: a fellow who can dissemble, seduce, sneer, make his way over dead bodies. But thanks to a certain shortcoming in my temperament, I am condemned to remain a decent man — and what is still more painful perhaps: to hear everybody say that I am one.

MRS. WEGRAT (*who has been listening with a smile*)

I wonder whether you have told the truth about what is keeping you here in Vienna?

REUMANN
Certainly. Indeed, I have no other reason. I have no right to have any other. Don't let us talk any more of it.

MRS. WEGRAT
Are we not such good friends that I can talk calmly with you of everything? I know what you have in mind. But I believe that it might be in your power to drive certain illusions and dreams out of the soul of a young girl. And it would be such a comfort to me if I could leave you for good among these people, all of whom are

so near to me, and who yet know nothing whatever about each other — who are hardly aware of their mutual relationships even, and who seem fated to flitter away from each other to God knows where.

REUMANN
We'll talk of those things, madam, when it's time to do so.

MRS. WEGRAT
Of course, I regret nothing. I believe I have never regretted anything. But I have a feeling that something is out of order. Perhaps it's nothing but that strange glimmer in the eyes of Felix which has caused all this unrest within me. But isn't it peculiar — uncanny almost — to think that a man like him may go through the world with all his senses open and yet never know whom he has to thank for being in the world?

REUMANN
Don't let us indulge in generalities, Mrs. Wegrat. In that way you can set the most solid things shaking and swaying until the steadiest eyes begin to grow dizzy. My own conclusion is this: that a lie which has proved strong enough to sustain the peace of a household can be no less respectable than a truth which could do nothing but destroy the image of the past, fill the present with sorrow, and confuse the vision of the future. (*He goes out with Mrs. Wegrat*)

JOHANNA (*entering with Sala*)
In this way one always gets back to the same spot. I suppose your garden is bigger, Mr. von Sala?

SALA
My garden is the whole wide woods — that is, for people whose fancy is not restrained by a light fence.

JOHANNA
Your villa has grown very pretty.

SALA
Oh, you know it then?

JOHANNA
A little while ago I saw it again for the first time in three years.

SALA
But three years ago they hadn't put in the foundations yet.

JOHANNA
To me it was already standing there.

SALA
How mysterious....

JOHANNA
Not at all. If you will only remember. Once we made an excursion to Dornbach — my parents, and Felix, and I. There we met you and Mr. Fichtner, and it happened on the very spot where your house was to be built. And now everything looks just as you described it to us then.

SALA
But how did you happen to be in that vicinity?

JOHANNA
Since mamma was taken sick I have often had to take my walks alone....

SALA
And when was it you passed by my house?

JOHANNA
Not long ago — to-day.

SALA
To-day?

JOHANNA
Yes. I went all around it.

SALA
Oh? All around it? — Did you also notice the little gate that leads directly into the woods?

JOHANNA
Yes. — But from that spot the house is almost invisible. The leafage is very thick. — Where have you placed those busts of the Roman emperors?

SALA
They stand on columns at the opening of an avenue of trees. Right by is a small marble bench, and in front of the bench a little pool has been made.

JOHANNA (*nodding*)
Just as you told us that time.... And there is a greenish gray glitter on the water — and in the morning the shadow from the beech tree falls across it.... I know. (*She looks up at him and smiles; both go out together*)

CURTAIN

THE SECOND ACT



IN THE HOME of Julian Fichtner. A pleasant, rather distinguished room in a state of slight disorder. Books are piled on two chairs, while on another chair stands an open traveling bag. Julian is seated at a writing desk, from the drawers of which he is taking out papers. Some of these he destroys, while others are thrown into the waste-paper basket.

VALET (*announcing*)
Mr. von Sala. (*He goes out*)

SALA (*enters. His custom to walk up and down while talking asserts itself strikingly during the following scene. Now and then he sits down for a moment, often only on the arm of a chair. At times he stops beside Julian, putting his hand on the latter's shoulder while speaking. Two or three times during the scene he puts his hand to the left side of his chest, in a manner suggesting discomfort of some kind. But this gesture is not sharply accentuated*)

JULIAN
I am delighted. (*They shake hands*)

SALA
So you got back early this morning?

JULIAN
Yes.

SALA
And mean to stay...?

JULIAN
Haven't decided yet. Things are a little upset, as you see. And I fear they'll never be quite in shape again. I intend to give up this place.

SALA
Too bad. I have become so accustomed to it. In what direction are you going to move?

JULIAN
It's possible that I don't take any new quarters at all for a while, but just keep on moving about as I have been doing the last few years. I am even considering to have my things sold at auction.

SALA
That's a thought which gets no sympathy from me.

JULIAN
Really, I haven't got much sympathy for it myself. But the material side of the question has to be considered a

little, too. I have been spending too much these last years, and it has to be evened up somehow. Probably I'll settle down again later on. Sometime one must get back to peace and work, I suppose. — Well, how goes it with you? What are our friends and acquaintances doing?

SALA
So you haven't seen anybody yet?

JULIAN
Not one. And you are the only one I have written about my being here.

SALA
And you have not yet called on the Wegrats?

JULIAN
No. I even hesitate to go there.

SALA
Why?

JULIAN
After a certain age it would perhaps be better never to put your foot in any place where your earlier years were spent. It is so rare to find things and people the same as when you left them. Isn't that so? — Mrs. Gabrielle is said to have changed considerably in the course of her sickness. That's what Felix told me at least. I should prefer not to see her again. Oh, you can understand that, Sala.

SALA (*rather surprised*)
Of course, I understand. How long is it you have had no news from Vienna?

JULIAN
I have constantly started ahead of my mail. Not a single letter has overtaken me during the last fortnight. (*Alarmed*) What has happened?

SALA
Mrs. Gabrielle died a week ago.

JULIAN
Oh! (*He is deeply moved; for a while he walks back and forth; then he resumes his seat and says after a pause*) Of course, it was to be expected, and yet....

SALA
Her death came easily.... You know how those left behind always pretend to know such things with certainty. Anyhow, she fell asleep quietly one night and never woke up again.

JULIAN (*in low voice*)
Poor Gabrielle! — Did you see anything of her toward the end?

SALA

Yes, I went there almost daily.

JULIAN
Oh, did you?

SALA
Johanna asked me. She was literally afraid of being alone with her mother.

JULIAN
Afraid?

SALA
The sick woman inspired her with a sort of horror. She has calmed down a little now.

JULIAN
What a strange creature.... And how does our friend, the professor, bear up under his loss? Resigned to the will of God, I suppose?

SALA
My dear Julian, the man has a position. I fear we cannot grasp that, we who are Gods by the grace of the moment — and also less than men at times.

JULIAN
Of course, Felix is not here?

SALA
I talked with him less than an hour ago, and informed him that you were here. It made him very happy to have you call on him in Salzburg.

JULIAN
It looked so to me. And he did me a lot of good. For that matter, I have really thought of settling down in Salzburg.

SALA
For ever?

JULIAN
For a while. On account of Felix, too. His unspoiled nature affects me very pleasantly — it makes me actually feel younger. Were he not my son, I might almost envy him — and not on account of his youth alone. (*With a smile*) Thus there is nothing left for me but to love him. I must say that I feel a little ashamed at having to do it incognito, so to speak.

SALA
Are not these feelings a little belated in their appearance?

JULIAN
Oh, I suppose they were there long before I knew. And, you know, I saw the youngster for the first time when

he was ten or eleven years old, and it was only then I learned that he was my son.

SALA
It must have been a strange meeting between you and Mrs. Gabrielle, ten years after you had committed that piece of hideous perfidy — as our ancestors used to put it.

JULIAN
It wasn't strange even. It came about quite naturally. Shortly after my return from Paris I happened to meet Wegrat on the street. Of course, we had heard of each other from time to time, and we met as old friends. There are people who seem born to a fate of that kind.... And as for Gabrielle....

SALA
She had forgiven you, of course?

JULIAN
Forgiven...? It was more or less than that. Only once did we talk of the past — she without reproach, and I without regret: as if the whole story had happened to somebody else. And after that never again. I might have thought some miracle had wiped those earlier days out of her memory. In fact, as far as I am concerned, there seemed to be no real connection between that quiet matron and the creature I had once loved. And as for the youngster — well, you know — at first I didn't care more for him than I might have cared for any other pretty and gifted child. — Of course, ten years ago my life had a different aspect. I was still clinging to so many things which since then have slipped away from me. It was only in the course of time that I became more and more drawn to the house, until at last I began to feel at home there.

SALA
I hope you never took offense at my gradual discovery of the true state of affairs.

JULIAN
You, at any rate, didn't think me very sensible....

SALA
Why not? I too find that family life in itself is quite attractive. Only it ought, after all, to be experienced in one's own family.

JULIAN
You know very well that I have frequently felt something like actual shame at the incongruity of that relationship. It was in fact one of the things that drove me away. Of course, there were a lot of other things that pressed on me at the time. Especially that I couldn't make a real success out of my work.

SALA
But you hadn't been exhibiting anything for a long time.

JULIAN
It wasn't external success I had in mind. I could never get into the right mood any more, and I hoped that traveling would help me again, as it had done so often in earlier years.

SALA
And how did you fare? We have heard so little of you here. You might really have written me a little more frequently and fully. For you know, of course, that I care a great deal more for you than for most other people. We have such a knack of giving each other the right cue — don't you think? There are sentimental people who speak of such a relation as friendship. And it is not impossible that we used to address each other by our Christian names some time during the last century, or that you may even have wept your fill on my shoulder. I have missed you more than once during these two years — honestly! On my lonely walks I have quite frequently thought of our pleasant chats in the Dornbach park, where we were in the habit of disposing temporarily of (*quoting*) "what is most lofty and profound in this our world." — Well, Julian, from where do you come anyhow?

JULIAN
From the Tyrol? During the Summer I made long tours on foot. I have even turned mountain climber in my old days. I spent a whole week at one of those pasturing grounds in the Alps.... Yes, I have been up to all sorts of things. It's a wonder what you can do when you are all alone.

SALA
And you have really been all alone?

JULIAN
Yes.

SALA
All these last years?

JULIAN
If I don't count a few nonsensical interruptions — yes.

SALA
But there should have been no difficulty in that respect.

JULIAN
I know. But I cannot rest satisfied with what is still offered me of that kind of thing. I have been badly spoiled, Sala. Up to a certain period my life passed away in a constant orgy of tenderness and passion, and of power, you might say. And that is all over. Oh, Sala, what pitiful fictions I have had to steal, and beg, and buy, during these last years! It gives me nausea to look back at it, and it horrifies me to look ahead. And I ask myself: can there really be nothing left of all that glow with which I once embraced the world but a sort of silly wrath because it's all over — because I — *I* — am no less subject to human laws than anybody else?

SALA
Why all this bitterness, Julian? There is still a great deal to be had out of this world, even when some of the pleasures and enjoyments of our earlier years have begun to appear tasteless or unseemly. And how can you, of all people, miss that feeling, Julian?

JULIAN
Snatch his part from an actor and ask him if he can still take pleasure in the beautiful scenery surrounding

him.

SALA
But you have begun to work again while you were traveling?

JULIAN
Hardly at all.

SALA
Felix told us that you had brought some sketches from your trunk in order to show him.

JULIAN
He spoke of them?

SALA
Yes, and nothing but good.

JULIAN
Really?

SALA
And as you showed those things to him, you must have thought rather well of them yourself.

JULIAN
That was not the reason why I let him see them. (*Walking back and forth*) I must tell you — at the risk of having you think me a perfect fool.

SALA
Oh, a little more or less won't count. Speak out.

JULIAN
I wanted him at least not to lose faith in me. Can you understand that? After all, he is nearer to me than the rest. Of course, I know — to everybody, even to you, I am one who has gone down, who is finished — one of those whose only talent was his youth. It doesn't bother me very much. But to Felix I want to be the man I was once — just as I still *am* that man. When he learns sometime that I am his father, he must be proud of it.

SALA
When he learns it...?

JULIAN
I have no intention to keep it hidden from him forever. Now, when his mother is dead, less than ever. Last time I talked to him, it became clear to me, not only that it would be right, but that it would almost be a duty, to tell him the truth. He has a mind for essentials. He will understand everything. And I shall have a human being who belongs to me, who knows that he belongs to me, and for whose sake it is worth while to keep on living in this world. I shall live near him, and be with him a good deal. Once more I shall have my existence put on a solid basis, so to speak, and not hung in mid-air, as it is now. And then I shall be able to work again — work as I did once — as when I was a young man. Work, that is what I am going to do — and all of you

will turn out to have been wrong — all of you!

SALA
But to whom has it occurred to doubt you? If you could only have heard us talk of you a little while ago, Julian. Everybody expects that, sooner or later, you — will find yourself again completely.

JULIAN
Well, that's enough about me, more than enough. Pardon me. Let us hear something about yourself at last. I suppose you have already moved into your new house?

SALA
Yes.

JULIAN
And what plans have you for the immediate future?

SALA
I am thinking of going to Asia with Count Ronsky.

JULIAN
With Ronsky? Are you going to join that expedition about which so much has been written?

SALA
Yes. Some such undertaking has been tempting me for a long time. Are you perhaps familiar with the Rolston report on the Bactrian and Median excavations of 1892?

JULIAN
No.

SALA
Well, it is positively staggering. Think of it — they suspect that under the refuse and the dust lies a monster city, something like the present London in extent. At that time they made their way into a palace, where the most wonderful paintings were found. These were perfectly preserved in several rooms. And they dug out stairways — built of a marble that is nowhere to be found nowadays. Perhaps it was brought from some island which since then has sunk beneath the sea. Three hundred and twelve steps glittering like opals and leading down into unknown depths.... Unknown because they ceased digging after they had reached the three hundred and twelfth step — God only knows why! I don't think I can tell you how those steps pique my curiosity.

JULIAN
But it has always been asserted that the Rolston expedition was lost?

SALA
No, not quite as bad as that. Out of twenty-four Europeans, eight got back after three years in spite of all — and half a dozen of them had been lost before they ever got there. You have to pass through pretty bad fever belts. And at that time they had to face an attack of the Kurds, too, by which several were done for. But we

shall be much better equipped. Furthermore, at the border we shall be joined by a Russian contingent which is traveling under military escort. And here, too, they think of putting a military aspect on the affair. As to the fever — that doesn't scare me — it can't do me any harm. As a young man I spent a number of particularly dangerous Summer nights in the *thermae* of Caracalla — you know, of course, what boggy ground that is — and remained well.

JULIAN
But that doesn't prove anything.

SALA
Oh yes, a little. There I came across a Roman girl whose home was right by the Appian Way. She caught the fever and died from it.... To be sure, I am not as young as I was then, but so far I have been perfectly well.

JULIAN (*who has already smoked several cigarettes, offers one to Sala*) Don't you smoke?

SALA
Thanks. Really, I shouldn't. Only yesterday Dr. Reumann told me I mustn't.... Nothing particular — my heart is a little restless, that's all. Well, a single one won't do any harm, I suppose.

VALET (*enters*)
Miss Herms, sir. She's asking whether she can see you.

JULIAN
Certainly. Ask her to come in.

VALET (*goes out*)

IRENE HERMS (*enters. She is about forty-three, but doesn't look it. Her dress is simple and in perfect taste. Her movements are vivacious, and at times almost youthful in their swiftness. Her hair is deeply blonde in color and very heavy. Her eyes are merry, good-humored most of the time, and easily filled with tears. She comes in with a smile and nods in a friendly manner to Sala. To Julian, who has gone to meet her, she holds out her hand with an expression on her face that is almost happy*) Good evening. Well? (*She has the habit of pronouncing that "well" in a tone of sympathetic inquiry*) So I did right after all in keeping my patience a couple of days more. Here I've got you back now. (*To Sala*) Can you guess the length of time we haven't seen each other?

JULIAN
More than three years.

IRENE (*nods assent and permits him at last to withdraw his hand from hers*) In all our lives that has never happened before. And your last letter is already two months old. I call it "letter" just to save my face. But it was only a view-card. Where in the world have you been anyhow?

JULIAN
Sit down, won't you? I'll tell you all about it. Won't you take off your hat? You'll stay a while, I hope?

IRENE

Of course. — And the way you look! (*To Sala*) Fine, don't you think? I've always known that a gray beard would make him look awfully interesting.

SALA (*to Julian*)
Now you'll have nothing but pleasantries to listen to. Unfortunately I shall have to be moving.

IRENE
You're not leaving on my account, I hope?

SALA
How can you imagine such a thing, Miss Herms?

IRENE
I suppose you are bound for the Wegrats'? — What do you think of it, Julian? Isn't it dreadful? (*To Sala*) Please give them my regards.

SALA
I'm not going there now. I'm going home.

IRENE
Home? And you say that in such a matter-of-fact way? I understand you are now living in a perfect palace.

SALA
No, anything but that. A modest country house. It would give me special pleasure, Miss Herms, if sometime you would make sure of it in person. My garden is really pretty.

IRENE
Have you fruit trees, too, and vegetables?

SALA
In this respect I can only offer you a stray cabbage and a wild cherry tree.

IRENE
Well, if my time permit, I shall make a point of coming out there to have a look at your villa.

JULIAN
Must you leave again so soon?

IRENE
Certainly. I have to get home again. Only this morning I had a letter from my little nephew — and he's longing for me. A little rascal of five, and he, too, is longing already. What do you think of that?

SALA
And you are also longing to get back, I suppose?

IRENE
It isn't that. But I'm beginning to get accustomed to Vienna again. As I'm going about the streets here, I run

across memories at every corner. — Can you guess where I was yesterday, Julian? In the rooms where I used to live as a child. It wasn't easy by any means, as a lot of strangers are living there now. But I got into the rooms just the same.

SALA (*with amicable irony*)
How did you manage it, Miss Herms?

IRENE
I sneaked in under a pretext. I pretended to believe that there was a room to be let — for a single elderly lady. But at last I fell to weeping so that I could see the people thought me out of my mind. And then I told them the true reason for my coming there. A clerk in the post-office is living there now with his wife and two children. One of these was such a nice little chap. He was playing railroad with an engine that could be wound up, and that ran over one of my feet all the time.... But I can see that all this doesn't interest you very much, Mr. von Sala.

SALA
How *can* you interrupt yourself like that, Miss Herms, just when it is most exciting? I should have loved to hear more about it. But now I must really go, unfortunately. Good-by, Julian. — Then, Miss Herms, I may count on a visit from you. (*He goes out*)

IRENE
Thank God!

JULIAN (*smiling*)
Do you still have the same antipathy for him?

IRENE
Antipathy? — I hate him! Nothing but your incredible kindness of heart would let him come near you. For you have no worse enemy.

JULIAN
Where did you get that idea?

IRENE
My instinct tells me — you can feel such things.

JULIAN
I fear, however, that even now you cannot judge him quite objectively.

IRENE
Why not?

JULIAN
You can't forgive him that you failed in one of his plays ten years ago.

IRENE
Unfortunately it's already twelve years ago. And it wasn't my fault. For my opinion in regard to his so-called

poetry is, that it's nonsense. And I am not the only one who thinks so, as you know. But you don't know him, of course. To appreciate that gentleman in all his glory, you must have enjoyed him at a rehearsal. (*Imitating Sala*) Oh, madam, that's verse — it's verse, dear madam.... Only when you have heard that kind of thing from him can you understand how limitless his arrogance is.... And everybody knows, by the way, that he killed his wife.

JULIAN (*amused*)
But, girl, who in the world put such horrible ideas into your head?

IRENE
Oh, people don't die willy-nilly like that, at twenty-five....

JULIAN
I hope, Irene, that you don't talk like this to other people?

IRENE
What would be the use? Everyone knows it but you. And I for my part have no reason to spare Mr. von Sala, who for twenty years has pursued me with his jeers.

JULIAN
And yet you are going to call on him?

IRENE
Of course. Beautiful villas interest me very much. And they tell me his is ravishing. If you were only to see people who....

JULIAN
Hadn't killed anybody....

IRENE
Really, we show him too much honor in talking so long about him. That ends it. — Well, Julian? How goes it? Why haven't you written me oftener? Is it possible you didn't dare?

JULIAN
Dare...?

IRENE
Were you forbidden, I mean?

JULIAN
I see. — Nobody can forbid me anything.

IRENE
Honestly? You live all by yourself?

JULIAN
Yes.

IRENE
I'm delighted. I can't help it, Julian, but I am delighted. Although it's sheer nonsense. This day, or the next, there'll be something new going on.

JULIAN
Those days are past.

IRENE
If it were only true! — Can I have a cup of tea?

JULIAN
Certainly. The samovar is right there.

IRENE
Where? — Oh, over there. And the tea? — Oh, I know! (*She opens a small cupboard and brings out what she needs; during the next few minutes she is busy preparing the tea*)

JULIAN
So you are really going to stay here only a couple of days more?

IRENE
Of course. I have done all my ordering. You understand, in my sister's house out there one doesn't need to dress up.

JULIAN
Tell me about it. How do you like it out there?

IRENE
Splendidly. Oh, it's bliss merely to hear nothing more about the theater.

JULIAN
And yet you'll return to it sometime.

IRENE
That's where you are completely mistaken. Why should I? You must remember that I have now reached the goal of all my desires: fresh air, and woods right by; horseback riding across meadows and fields; early morning seated in the big park, dressed in my kimono, and nobody daring to intrude. To put it plainly: no people, no manager, no public, no colleagues, no playwrights — though, of course, all are not as arrogant as your precious Sala. — Well, all this I have attained at last. I live in the country. I have a country house — almost a little palace, you might say. I have a park, and a horse, and a kimono — to use as much as I please. It isn't all mine, I admit — except the kimono, of course — but what does that matter? In the bargain, I live with the best people one could hope to find in this world. For my brother-in-law is, if possible, a finer fellow than Lora herself even.

JULIAN
Wasn't he rather making up to you once?

IRENE
I should say he was! He wanted to marry me at any cost. Of course! — It was always in me that they were at first — I mean that they always *have been* in love with me. But as a rule the clever ones have gone over to Lora. In fact, I have always felt a little distrustful toward you because you never fell in love with Lora. And how much she is ahead of me — well, *you* know, and it's no use talking of it. What all don't I owe to Lora!... If it hadn't been for her...! — Well, it's with them I have been living the last half year.

JULIAN
The question is only how long you are going to stand it.

IRENE
How long...? But, Julian, I must ask you what there could be to make me leave such a paradise and return to the morass where I (*in a lowered voice*) spent twenty-five years of my life. What could I possibly expect out of the theater anyhow? I am not made for elderly parts. The heroic mother, the shrewish dame and the funny old woman are equally little to my liking. I intend to die as "the young lady from the castle" — as an old maid, you might say — and if everything goes right, I shall appear to the grandchildren of my sister some hundred years from now as the Lady in White. In a word, I have the finest kind of a life ahead of me. — Why are you laughing?

JULIAN
It pleases me to see you so jolly again — so youthful.

IRENE
It's the country air, Julian. You should try it yourself for a good long while. It's glorious! In fact, I think I have missed my true calling. I'm sure the good Lord meant me for a milkmaid or farm girl of some kind. Or perhaps for a young shepherd. I have always looked particularly well in pants. — There now. Do you want me to pour a cup for you at once? (*She pours the tea*) Have you nothing to go with it?

JULIAN
I think there must still be a few crackers left in my bag. (*He takes a small package out of his traveling bag*)

IRENE
Thanks. That's fine.

JULIAN
This is quite a new fancy of yours, however.

IRENE
Crackers...?

JULIAN
No, nature.

IRENE
How can you say so? I have always had a boundless love for nature. Don't you recall the excursions we used to make? Don't you remember how once we fell asleep in the woods on a hot Summer afternoon? And don't

you ever think of that shrine of the Holy Virgin, on the hill where we were caught by the storm?... Oh, mercy! Nature is no silly illusion. And still later — when I struck the bad days and wanted to kill myself for your sake, fool that I was... then nature simply proved my salvation. Indeed, Julian! I could still show you the place where I threw myself on the grass and wept. You have to walk ten minutes from the station, through an avenue of acacias, and then on to the brook. Yes, I threw myself on the grass and wept and wailed. It was one of those days, you know, when you had again sent me packing from your door. Well, and then, when I had been lying half an hour in the grass, and had wept my fill, then I got up again — and began to scamper all over the meadow. Just like a kid, all by myself. Then I wiped my eyes and felt quite right again. (*Pause*) Of course, next morning I was at your door again, setting up a howl, and then the story began all over again. [*It is growing dark.*

JULIAN
Why do you still think of all that?

IRENE
But you do it, too. And who has proved the more stupid of us two in the end? Who? Ask yourself, on your conscience. Who?... Have you been more happy with anybody else than with me? Has anybody else clung to you as I did? Has anybody else been so fond of you?... No, I am sure. And as to that foolish affair into which I stumbled during my engagement abroad — you might just as well have overlooked it. Really, there isn't as much to that kind of thing as you men want to make out — when it happens to one of us, that is to say. (*Both drink of their tea*)

JULIAN
Should I get some light?

IRENE
It's quite cosy in the twilight like this.

JULIAN
"Not much to it," you say. Perhaps you are right. But when it happens to anybody, he gets pretty mad as a rule. And if we had made up again — it would never have been as before. It's better as it is. When the worst was over, we became good friends once more, and so we have been ever since. And that is a pretty fine thing, too.

IRENE
Yes. And nowadays I'm quite satisfied. But at that time...! Oh, mercy, what a time that was! But you don't know anything about it, of course. It was afterward I began really to love you — after I had lost you through my own thoughtlessness. It was only then I learned how to be faithful in the true sense. For anything that has happened to me since then.... But it's asking too much that a man should understand that kind of thing.

JULIAN
I understand quite well, Irene. You may be sure.

IRENE
And besides I want to tell you something: it was nothing but a well-deserved punishment for both of us.

JULIAN
For both of us?

IRENE
Yes, that's what I have figured out long ago. A well-deserved punishment.

JULIAN
For both of us?

IRENE
Yes, for you, too.

JULIAN
But what do you mean by that?

IRENE
We had deserved no better.

JULIAN
We...? In what way?

IRENE (*very seriously*)
You are so very clever otherwise, Julian. Now what do you say — do you think it could have happened as it did — do you think I could have made a mistake like that — if we — had had a child? Ask yourself on your conscience, Julian — do you believe it? I don't, and you don't either. Everything would have happened in a different way. Everything. We had stayed together then. We had had *more* children. We had married. We might be living together now. I shouldn't have become an old-maidish "young lady from the castle," and you wouldn't have become....

JULIAN
An old bachelor.

IRENE
Well, if you say it yourself. And the main thing is this: we *had* a child. I had a child. (*Pause*)

JULIAN (*walking back and forth*)
What's the use, Irene? Why do you begin to talk of all those forgotten things again...?

IRENE
Forgotten?

JULIAN
... Things gone by.

IRENE
Yes, they are bygone, of course. But out there in the country you have plenty of time. All sorts of things keep passing through your head. And especially when you see other people's children — Lora has two boys, you

know — then you get all sorts of notions. It almost amounted to a vision not long ago.

JULIAN
What?

IRENE
It was toward evening, and I had walked across the fields. I do it quite often, all by myself. Far and wide there was nobody to be seen. And the village down below was quite deserted, too. And I walked on and on, always in direction of the woods. And suddenly I was no longer alone. You were with me. And between us was the child. We were holding it by the hands — our little child. (*Angrily, to keep herself from crying*) It's too silly for anything! I know, of course, that our child would be a gawky youngster of twenty-three by now — that it might have turned into a scamp or a good-for-nothing girl. Or that it might be dead already. Or that it had drifted out into the wide world, so that we had nothing left of it — oh, yes, yes.... But we should have had it once, for all that — once there would have been a little child that seemed rather fond of us. And.... (*She is unable to go on; silence follows*)

JULIAN (*softly*)
You shouldn't talk yourself into such a state, Irene.

IRENE
I am not talking myself into anything.

JULIAN
Don't brood. Accept things as they are. There have been other things in your life — better things, perhaps. Your life has been much richer than that of a mere mother could ever have been.... You have been an artist.

IRENE (*as if to herself*)

I don't care that much for it.

JULIAN
A great, famous one — that means something after all. And your life has brought you many other exquisite experiences — since the one with me. I am sure of it.

IRENE
What have I got left of it? What does it amount to? A woman who has no child has never been a woman. But a woman who once might have had one — who should have had one, and who — (*with a glance at him*) — has never become a mother, she is nothing but — oh! But that's what a man cannot understand! It is what not one of them can understand! In this respect the very best one of the lot will always remain something of a cad. Is there one of you who knows how many of his own offspring have been set adrift in the world? I know at least that there are none of mine. Can you say as much?

JULIAN
And if I did know....

IRENE

How? Have you got one really? — Oh, speak, please! You can tell *me,* Julian, can't you? Where is it? How old is it? A boy? Or a girl?

JULIAN
Don't question me.... Even if I had a child, it wouldn't belong to you anyhow.

IRENE
He has a child! He has a child! (*Pause*) Why do you permit it to be drifting around in the world then?

JULIAN
You yourself have given the explanation: in this respect the very best of us remains always something of a cad. And I am not the best one at that.

IRENE
Why don't you go and get it?

JULIAN
How could it be any of my concern? How could I dare to make it my concern? Oh, that's enough.... (*Pause*) Do you want another cup of tea?

IRENE
No, thanks. No more now. (*Pause; it is growing darker*) He has a child, and I have never known it! (*Protracted silence*)

VALET (*enters*)

JULIAN
What is it?

VALET
Lieutenant Wegrat asks if you are at home, sir?

JULIAN
Certainly. Ask him in.

VALET (*goes out after having turned on the light*)

IRENE
Young Wegrat? — I thought he had already left again. — The poor chap! He seemed utterly stunned.

JULIAN
I can imagine.

IRENE
You visited him at Salzburg?

JULIAN
Yes, I happened to be there a couple of days last August.

FELIX (*enters, dressed as a civilian*)
Good evening. — Good evening, Miss Herms.

IRENE
Good evening, Lieutenant.

JULIAN
My dear Felix — I was going to call on you — this very evening. It’s extremely nice of you to take the trouble.

FELIX
I have to be off again the day after to-morrow, and so I wasn’t sure whether I could find any chance at all to see you.

JULIAN
Won’t you take off your coat? — Think of it, I didn’t have the slightest idea.... It was Sala who told me — less than an hour ago.
[*Irene is looking from one to the other.*

FELIX
We didn’t dream of this when we took that walk in the Mirabell Gardens last summer.

JULIAN
Was it very sudden?

FELIX
Yes. And I, who couldn’t be with her.... Late that evening I had to leave, and she died during the night.

IRENE
Say rather that she didn’t wake up again next morning.

FELIX
We owe a lot of thanks to you, Miss Herms.

IRENE
Oh, please...!

FELIX
It always gave my mother so much pleasure to have you with her, chatting, or playing the piano to her.

IRENE
Oh, don’t mention my playing...!
[*A clock strikes.*

IRENE
Is it that late? Then I have to go.

JULIAN
What's the hurry, Miss Herms?

IRENE
I'm going to the opera. I have to make good use of the few days I shall still be here.

FELIX
Shall we see you at our house again, Miss Herms?

IRENE
Certainly. — You'll have to leave before me, won't you?

FELIX
Yes, my furlough will be up....

IRENE (*as if en passant*)
How long have you been an officer anyhow, Felix?

FELIX
For three years really — but I didn't apply for a commission until this year — a little too late, perhaps.

IRENE
Too late? Why? — How old are you, Felix?

FELIX
Twenty-three.

IRENE
Oh! (*Pause*) But when I saw you four years ago as a volunteer, I thought at once you would stay in the service. — Do you remember, Julian, I told you so at the time?

JULIAN
Yes....

FELIX
That must have been in the summer, the last time you called on us.

IRENE
I think so....

FELIX
Many things have changed since then.

IRENE
Indeed! Those were still happy days. — Don't you think so, Julian? For we haven't met either since we spent those beautiful summer evenings in the garden of the Wegrats.

JULIAN (*nods assent*)

IRENE (*stands again looking now at Julian and now at Felix; brief pause*) Oh, but now it's high time for me to be gone. — Good-by. Remember me at home, Lieutenant. — Good-by, Julian. (*She goes out, accompanied to the door by Julian*)

FELIX
Haven't you made some changes here?

JULIAN
Not to my knowledge. And how could you know anyhow? You have only been here two or three times.

FELIX
Yes. But the last time at one of the most important moments in my life. I came here to get your advice.

JULIAN
Well, everything has turned out in accordance with your wish. Even your father has resigned himself to it.

FELIX
Yes, he has resigned himself. Of course, he would have preferred to see me continue my technical studies. But now he has seen that it is quite possible to lead a sensible life in uniform too — without any debts or duels. In fact, my life is almost too smooth. However, there is at least more to anticipate for one of us than for most people. And that's always something.

JULIAN
And how are things at home?

FELIX
At home.... Really, it's almost as if that word had lost its meaning.

JULIAN
Has your father resumed his duties again?

FELIX
Of course. Two days later he was back in his studio. He is wonderful. But I can't quite understand it.... Am I disturbing you, Mr. Fichtner? You were putting your papers in order, I think.

JULIAN
Oh, there's no hurry about that. They're easily put in order. Most of them I burn.

FELIX
Why?

JULIAN
It's more sensible, don't you think, to destroy things one hardly cares to look at any more?

FELIX
But doesn't it make you rather sad to clean out your past like that?

JULIAN
Sad?... No, it's entirely too natural a process for that.

FELIX
I can't see it that way. Look here. To burn a letter, or a picture, or something of that kind, immediately after you have got it — that seems quite natural to me. But something at all worthy of being kept as a remembrance of some poignant joy or equally poignant sorrow would seem incapable of ever losing its significance again. And especially in the case of a life like yours, that has been so rich and so active.... It would seem to me that at times you must feel something like — awe in the face of your own past.

JULIAN
Where do you get such thoughts — you, who are so young?

FELIX
They just came into my head this minute.

JULIAN
You are not so very much mistaken, perhaps. But there is something else besides, that makes me want to clean house. I am about to become homeless, so to speak.

FELIX
Why?

JULIAN
I'm giving up my rooms here, and don't know yet what my next step will be. And so I think it's more pleasant to let these things come to a decent end rather than to put them in a box and leave them to molder away in a cellar.

FELIX
But don't you feel sorry about a lot of it?

JULIAN
Oh, I don't know.

FELIX
And then you must have mementoes that mean something to other people besides yourself. Sketches of all kinds, for instance, which I think you have saved to some extent.

JULIAN
Are you thinking of those little things I showed you in Salzburg?

FELIX
Yes, of those too, of course.

JULIAN
They are still wrapped up. Would you like to have them?

FELIX
Indeed, I should feel very thankful. They seemed to have a particular charm for me. (*Pause*) But there's something else I wanted to ask of you. A great favor. If you will let me....

JULIAN
Tell me, please.

FELIX
I thought you might still have left a picture of my mother as a young girl. A small picture in water colors painted by yourself.

JULIAN
Yes, I did paint such a picture.

FELIX
And you have still got it?

JULIAN
I guess it can be found.

FELIX
I should like to see it.

JULIAN
Did your mother remember this picture...?

FELIX
Yes, she mentioned it to me the last evening I ever saw her — the evening before she died. At the time I didn't imagine, of course, that the end was so near — and I don't think she could guess it either. To-day it seems rather peculiar to me that, on that very evening, she had to talk so much of days long gone by.

JULIAN
And of this little picture, too?

FELIX
It's a very good one, I understand.

JULIAN (*as if trying to remember*)
Where did I put it? Wait now.... (*He goes to a book case, the lower part of which has solid doors; these he opens, disclosing several shelves piled with portfolios*) I painted it in the country — in the little house where your grandparents used to live.

FELIX
I know.

JULIAN
You can hardly recall the old people, I suppose?

FELIX
Very vaguely. They were quite humble people, were they not?

JULIAN
Yes. (*He has taken a big portfolio from one of the shelves*) It ought to be in this portfolio. (*He puts it on the writing desk and opens it; then he sits down in front of it*)

FELIX (*stands behind him, looking over his shoulder*)

JULIAN
Here is the house in which they lived — your grandparents and your mother. (*He goes through the sketches, one by one*) And here is a view of the valley seen from the cemetery.

FELIX
In Summer....

JULIAN
Yes. — And here is the little inn at which your father and I used to stop.... And here.... (*He looks in silence at the sketch; both remain silent for a long while*)

FELIX (*picking up the sketch*)
How old was my mother at the time?

JULIAN (*who remains seated*)
Eighteen.

FELIX (*going a few steps away and leaning against the bookcase in order to get better light on the picture*)

A year before she was married, then.

JULIAN
It was done that very year. (*Pause*)

FELIX
What a strange look that meets me out of those eyes.... There's a smile on her lips.... It's almost as if she were talking to me....

JULIAN
What was it your mother told you — that last evening?

FELIX
Not very much. But I feel as if I knew more than she had told me. What a queer thought it is, that as she is now looking at me out of this picture, so she must have been looking at you once. It seems as if there was a certain timidity in that look. Something like fear almost.... In such a way you look at people out of another world, for which you long, and of which you are afraid nevertheless.

JULIAN

At that time your mother had rarely been outside the village.

FELIX
She must have been different from all other women you have met, wasn't she? — Why don't you say anything? I am not one of those men who cannot understand — who won't understand that their mothers and sisters are women after all. I can easily understand that it must have been a dangerous time for her — and for somebody else as well. (*Very simply*) You must have loved my mother very much?

JULIAN
You have a curious way of asking questions. — Yes, I did love her.

FELIX
And those moments must have been very happy ones, when you sat in that little garden with its overgrown fence, holding this canvas on your knees, and out there on the bright meadow, among all those red and white flowers, stood this young girl with anxiously smiling eyes, holding her straw hat in one hand.

JULIAN
Your mother talked of those moments that last evening?

FELIX
Yes. — It is childish perhaps, but since then it has seemed impossible to me that any other human being could ever have meant so much to you as this one?

JULIAN (*more and more deeply moved, but speaking very quietly*) I shall not answer you. — In the end I should instinctively be tempted to make myself appear better than I am. You know very well how I have lived my life — that it has not followed a regulated and direct course like the lives of most other people. I suppose that the gift of bestowing happiness of the kind that lasts, or of accepting it, has never been mine.

FELIX
That's what I feel. It is what I have always felt. Often with something like regret — or sorrow almost. But just people like you, who are destined by their very nature to have many and varied experiences — just such people should, I think, cling more faithfully and more gratefully to memories of a tender, peaceful sort, like this — rather than to more passionate and saddening memories. — Am I not right?

JULIAN
Maybe you are.

FELIX
My mother had never before mentioned this picture to me. Isn't it strange?... That last night she did it for the first time. — We were left alone on the veranda. The rest had already bid me good-by.... And all of a sudden she began to talk about those summer days of long, long ago. Her words had an undercurrent of meanings which she probably did not realize. I believe that her own youth, which she had almost ceased to understand, was unconsciously taking mine into its confidence. It moved me more deeply than I can tell you. — Much as she cared for me, she had never before talked to me like that. And I believe that she had never been quite so dear to me as in those last moments. — And when finally I had to leave, I felt that she had still much more to tell me. — Now you'll understand why I had such a longing to see this picture. — I have almost the feeling

that it might go on talking to me as my mother would have done — if I had only dared to ask her one more question!

JULIAN
Ask it now.... Do ask it, Felix.

FELIX (*who becomes aware of the emotion betrayed in the voice of Julian, looks up from the picture*)

JULIAN
I believe that it can still tell you a great many things.

FELIX
What is the matter?

JULIAN
Do you want to keep that picture?

FELIX
Why...?

JULIAN
Well... take it. I don't give it to you. As soon as I have settled down again, I shall want it back. But you shall have a look at it whenever you want. And I hope matters will be so arranged that you won't have far to go either.

FELIX (*with his eyes on the picture*)
It grows more alive every second.... And that look was directed at you.... That look...? Can it be possible that I read it right?

JULIAN
Mothers have their adventures, too, like other women.

FELIX
Yes, indeed, I believe it has nothing more to hide from me.
[*He puts down the picture. Then a long pause follows. At last Felix puts on his coat.*

JULIAN
Are you not going to take it along?

FELIX
Not just now. It belongs to you much more than I could guess.

JULIAN
And to you...

FELIX
No, I don't want it until this new thing has become fully revealed to me. (*He looks Julian firmly in the eyes*) I

don’t quite know where I am. In reality, of course, there has been no change whatever. None — except that I know now what I...

JULIAN
Felix!

FELIX
No, that was something I could never have guessed. (*Looks long at Julian with an expression of mingled tenderness and curiosity*) Farewell.

JULIAN
Are you going?

FELIX
I need badly to be by myself for a while. — Until to-morrow.

JULIAN
Yes, and no longer, Felix. To-morrow I shall come to your — I’ll call on *you*, Felix.

FELIX
I shall be waiting for you. (*He goes out*)

JULIAN (*stands quite still for a moment; then he goes to the writing desk and stops beside it, lost in contemplation of the picture*)

CURTAIN

THE THIRD ACT



A ROOM AT the Wegrats' adjoining the veranda. The outlook is, of course, determined by the location.

JOHANNA (*is seated on a stool with her hands folded in her lap*)

SALA (*enters*)
Good morning, Johanna.

JOHANNA (*rises, goes to meet him, and draws him close to herself*) Are you coming for the last time?

SALA
For the last time? What an idea! There has not been the slightest change in our arrangements. To-day is the seventh of October, and the ship will leave Genoa on the twenty-sixth of November.

JOHANNA
Some day you will suddenly have disappeared. And I shall be standing by the garden door, and nobody will come to open it.

SALA
But that sort of thing is not needed between us two.

JOHANNA
No, indeed — bear that in mind.

FELIX (*enters*)
Oh, is that you, Mr. von Sala? (*They shake hands*) Well, how far have you got with your preparations?

SALA
There are hardly any needed. I shall pack my trunk, pull down the shades, lock the doors — and be off for the mysteries of far-away. There is something I want to ask you apropos of that, Felix. Would you care to come along?

FELIX (*startled*)
If I care.... Are you asking seriously, Mr. von Sala?

SALA
There is just so much seriousness in my question as you wish to put into it.

FELIX
What does it mean anyhow? If I want to go along to Asia? What use could they have for me in a venture of that kind?

SALA
Oh, that's pretty plain.

FELIX
Is the expedition not going to be one of purely scientific character?

SALA
Yes, that's what it is meant for, I suppose. But it is quite possible that various things may happen that would make the presence of some young men like you very desirable.

FELIX
Men like me...?

SALA
When Rolston went out there seven years ago, a lot of things happened which were not provided for in the original program. And they had to fight a regular battle, on a small scale, in the Kara-Kum district, not far from the river Amu-Daria.

REUMANN (*who has entered while Sala was speaking*)
To those who had to stay behind forever the scale of your battle was probably large enough. (*All greet each other and shake hands without letting the conversation be interrupted*)

SALA
In that respect you are probably right, Doctor.

FELIX
Pardon me, Mr. von Sala, but does this come from you alone? Is it just a sudden notion — or something more?

SALA
I have received no direct request from anybody to speak of this. But after the conference which took place at the Foreign Department yesterday, and which I attended, I feel entitled to add a little more. — Oh, no secrets at all! — You have probably read, Felix, that a member of the General Staff as well as several artillery and engineering officers are being sent with us in what might be termed a semi-official capacity. On account of the latest news from Asia — which, however, does not seem very reliable to me, as it has come by way of England — it has been decided to secure the additional cooperation of some young line officers, and all arrangements of this kind must be left to private initiative.

FELIX
And there might be a possibility for me...?

SALA
Will you permit me to speak to Count Ronsky?

FELIX
Have you already mentioned my name to him?

SALA
I have received permission to ask whether you could be prepared to board the ship with the rest at Genoa on

the twenty-sixth of November.

REUMANN
Do you mean to leave Vienna as soon as that?

SALA (*sarcastically*)
Yes. Why did you look at me like that, Doctor? That glance of yours was a little indiscreet.

REUMANN
In what respect?

SALA
It seemed to say: Yes, you can start, of course, but if you ever come back, that's more than doubtful.

REUMANN
Let me tell you, Mr. von Sala, that in the face of a venture like yours one might well express such doubts quite openly. But are you at all interested in whether you get back or not, Mr. von Sala? I don't suppose you belong to the kind of people who care to put their affairs in order.

SALA
No, indeed. Especially not as, in cases of that kind, it is generally the affairs of others which give you needless trouble. If I were to be interested at all in my own chances, it would be for much more selfish reasons.

JOHANNA
What reasons?

SALA
I don't want to be cheated out of the consciousness that certain moments are my final ones.

REUMANN
There are not many people who share your attitude in that respect.

SALA
At any rate, Doctor, you would have to tell me the absolute truth if I ever asked you for it. I hold that one has the right to drain one's own life to the last drop, with all the horrors and delights that may lie hidden at the bottom of it. Just as it is our evident duty every day to commit every good deed and every rascality lying within our capacity.... No, I won't let you rob me of my death moments by any kind of hocus-pocus. It would imply a small-minded attitude, worthy neither of yourself nor of me. — Well, Felix, the twenty-sixth of November then! That's still seven weeks off. In regard to any formalities that may be required, you need have no worry at all.

FELIX
How long a time have I got to make up my mind?

SALA
There's no reason to be precipitate. When does your furlough end?

FELIX
To-morrow night.

SALA
Of course, you are going to talk it over with your father?

FELIX
With my father.... Yes, of course. — At any rate I'll bring you the answer early to-morrow morning, Mr. von Sala.

SALA
Fine. It would please me very much. But you must bear in mind: it will be no picnic. I expect to see you soon, then. Good-by, Miss Johanna. Farewell, Doctor.
[*He goes out. A brief pause. Those left behind show signs of emotion.*

JOHANNA (*rising*)
I'm going to my room. Good-by, Doctor. (*She goes out*)

REUMANN
Have you made up your mind, Felix?

FELIX
Almost.

REUMANN
You'll come across much that is new to you.

FELIX
And my own self among it, I hope — which would be about time.... (*Quoting*) "The mysteries of far-away..." And will it really come true? Oh, the thrill of it!

REUMANN
And yet you ask time to consider?

FELIX
I hardly know why. And yet... The thought of leaving people behind and perhaps never seeing them again — and certainly not as they were when you left them; the thought, too, that perhaps your going will hurt them...

REUMANN
If nothing else makes you hesitate, then every moment of uncertainty is wasted. Nothing is more sure to estrange you from those dear to you than the knowledge that duty condemns you to stay near them. You must seize this unique opportunity. You must go to see Genoa, Asia Minor, Thibet, Bactria.... Oh, it must be splendid! And my best wishes will go with you. (*He gives his hand to Felix*)

FELIX
Thank you. But there will be plenty of time for wishes of that kind. Whatever may be decided, we shall meet more than once before I leave.

REUMANN
I hope so. Oh, of course!

FELIX (*looking hard at him*)
Doctor... it seems to me there was a final farewell in that pressure of your hand.

REUMANN (*with a smile*)
Is it ever possible to tell whether you will meet again?

FELIX
Tell me, Doctor — did Mr. von Sala interpret your glance correctly?

REUMANN
That has nothing to do with your case anyhow.

FELIX
Will he not be able to go with us?

REUMANN (*with hesitation*)
That's very hard to predict.

FELIX
You have never learned to lie, Doctor.

REUMANN
As the matter stands now, I think you can bring it to a successful conclusion without further assistance.

FELIX
Mr. von Sala called on you a few days ago?

REUMANN
Yes, it was only a while ago. (*Pause*) Well, you can see for yourself that he is not well, can't you? — So God be with you, Felix.

FELIX
Will you continue to befriend this house when I am gone?

REUMANN
Why do you ask questions like that, Felix?

FELIX
You don't mean to come here again? — But why?

REUMANN
I assure you...

FELIX
I understand...

REUMANN (*embarrassed*)
What can there be to understand...?

FELIX
My dear Doctor... I know now... why you don't want to come to this house any more.... It's another case of somebody else breaking his neck.... Dear friend...

REUMANN
Good luck to you... Felix...

FELIX
And if anybody should call you back...

REUMANN
Nobody will.... But if I should be *needed*, I can always be found...

JOHANNA (*comes into the room again*)

REUMANN
Good-by... Good-by, Miss Johanna...

JOHANNA
Are you going already, Doctor?

REUMANN
Yes.... Give my regards to your father. Good-by.... (*He shakes her hand*)

JOHANNA (*calmly*)
Did he tell you that Sala is doomed?

FELIX (*hesitates about what to say*)

JOHANNA
I knew it. (*With an odd gesture of deprecation as Felix wants to say something*) And you are going — with or without him?

FELIX
Yes. (*Pause*) There won't be much doing in this place after this.

JOHANNA (*remains unmoved*)

FELIX
And how are you going to live, Johanna?... I mean, how are the two of you going to live — you and father?

JOHANNA (*gives him a look as if his question surprised her*)

FELIX
He is going to be lonely. I think he would feel very grateful if you took a little more interest in him — if you

went for a walk for him when there is time for it. And you, too...

JOHANNA (*brusquely*)
How could that help me or him? What can he be to me or I to him? I was not made to assist people in days of trial. I can't help it, but that's the way I am. I seem to be stirred by a sort of hostility against people who appeal to my pity. I felt it like that all the time mother was sick.

FELIX
No, you were not made for that.... But what were you made for then?

JOHANNA (*shrugs her shoulders and sits down as before, with hands folded in her lap and her eyes staring straight ahead*)

FELIX
Johanna, why do you never talk to me any more as you used to? Have you, then, nothing to tell me? Don't you remember how we used to tell each other everything?

JOHANNA
That was long ago. We were children then.

FELIX
Why can't you talk to me any longer as you did then? Have you forgotten how well we two used to understand each other? How we used to confide all our secrets to each other? What good chums we used to be?... How we wanted to go out into the wide world together?

JOHANNA
Into the wide world.... Oh, yes, I remember. But there is nothing left now of all those words of wonder and romance.

FELIX
Perhaps it depends on ourselves only.

JOHANNA
No, those words have no longer the same meaning as before.

FELIX
What do you mean?

JOHANNA
Into the wide world...

FELIX
What is the matter, Johanna?

JOHANNA
Once, when we were in the museum together, I saw a picture of which I often think. It has a meadow with knights and ladies in it — and a forest, a vineyard, an inn, and young men and women dancing, and a big city

with churches and towers and bridges. And soldiers are marching across the bridges, and a ship is gliding down the river. And farther back there is a hill, and on that hill a castle, and lofty mountains in the extreme distance. And clouds are floating above the mountains, and there is mist on the meadow, and a flood of sunlight is pouring down on the city, and a storm is raging over the castle, and there is ice and snow on the mountains. — And when anybody spoke of "the wide world," or I read that term anywhere, I used always to think of that picture. And it used to be the same with so many other big-sounding words. Fear was a tiger with cavernous mouth — love was a page with long light curls kneeling at the feet of a lady — death was a beautiful young man with black wings and a sword in his hand — and fame was blaring bugles, men with bent backs, and a road strewn with flowers. In those days it was possible to talk of all sorts of things, Felix. But to-day everything has a different look — fame, and death, and love, and the wide world.

FELIX (*hesitatingly*)

I feel a little scared on your behalf, Johanna.

JOHANNA
Why, Felix?

FELIX
Johanna! — I wish you wouldn't do anything to worry father.

JOHANNA
Does that depend on me alone?

FELIX
I know in what direction your dreams are going, Johanna. — What is to come out of that?

JOHANNA
Is it necessary that something comes out of everything? — I think, Felix, that many people are destined to mean nothing to each other but a common memory.

FELIX
You have said it yourself, Johanna — that you are not made to see other people suffer.

JOHANNA (*shrinks slightly at those words*)

FELIX
Suffer... and...

JULIAN (*enters*)
How are you? (*He shakes hands with Felix*)

JOHANNA (*who has risen*)
Mr. Fichtner. (*She holds out her hand to him*)

JULIAN
I could hardly recognize you, Johanna. You have grown into a young lady now. — Has your father not come

home yet?

JOHANNA
He hasn't gone out yet. He has nothing to do at the Academy until twelve.

JULIAN
I suppose he's in his studio?

JOHANNA
I'll call him.
[*Julian looks around. As Johanna is about to leave the room, Wegrat enters, carrying his hat and stick.*

WEGRAT (*giving his hand to Julian*)
I'm delighted, my dear fellow.

JULIAN
I heard of it only after my arrival here yesterday — through Sala. I don't need to tell you...

WEGRAT
Thank you very much for your sympathy. I thank you with all my heart. — But sit down, please.

JULIAN
You were going out?

WEGRAT
Oh, it's no hurry. I have nothing to do in the Academy until twelve. Johanna, will you please get a carriage for me, just to be on the safe side?
[*Johanna goes out. Wegrat seats himself, as does Julian. Felix stands leaning against the glazed oven.*

WEGRAT
Well, you stayed away quite a while this time.

JULIAN
More than two years.

WEGRAT
If you had only got here ten days earlier, you could have had a last look at her. It came so very suddenly — although it wasn't unexpected.

JULIAN
So I have heard.

WEGRAT
And now you are going to stay right here, I suppose?

JULIAN
A little while. How long I am not yet able to tell.

WEGRAT
Of course not. The making of schedules has never been your line.

JULIAN
No, I have a certain disinclination for that kind of thing. (*Pause*)

WEGRAT
Oh, mercy, my dear fellow... how often have I not been thinking of you recently!

JULIAN
And I....

WEGRAT
No, you haven't had much chance for it.... But I.... As I enter the building where I now hold office and authority, I remember often how we two young chaps used to sit side by side in the model class, full of a thousand plans and hopes.

JULIAN
Why do you say that in such a melancholy tone? A lot of those things have come true, haven't they?

WEGRAT
Some — yes.... And yet one can't help wanting to be young again, even at the risk of similar sorrows and struggles....

JULIAN
And even at the risk of also having to live through a lot of nice things over again.

WEGRAT
Indeed, those are the hardest things to bear, once they have turned into memories. — You have been in Italy again?

JULIAN
Yes, in Italy too.

WEGRAT
It's a long time now since I was there. Since we made that walk together through the Ampezzo Valley, with the pack on our backs — to Pieve, and then right on to Venice. Can you remember? The sun has never again shone as brightly as it did then.

JULIAN
That must have been almost thirty years ago.

WEGRAT
No, not quite. You were already pretty well known at the time. You had just finished your splendid picture of Irene Herms. It was the year before I married.

JULIAN

Yes, yes. (*Pause*)

WEGRAT
Do you still recall the summer morning when you went with me to Kirchau for the first time?

JULIAN
Of course.

WEGRAT
How the light buggy carried us through the wide, sun-steeped valley? And do you remember the little garden at Hügelhang, where you became acquainted with Gabrielle and her parents?

FELIX (*with suppressed emotion*)
Father, is the house in which mother used to live still standing?

WEGRAT
No, it's gone long ago. They have built a villa on the spot. Five or six years ago, you know, we went there for the last time to visit the graves of your grandparents. Everything has been changed, except the cemetery.... (*To Julian*) Can you still remember that cool, cloudy afternoon, Julian, when we sat on the lower wall of the cemetery and had such a remarkable talk about the future?

JULIAN
I remember the day very clearly. But I have entirely forgotten what we were talking about.

WEGRAT
Just what we said has passed out of my mind, too, but I can still remember what an extraordinary talk it was.... In some way the world seemed to open up more widely. And I felt something like envy toward you, as I often did in those days. There rose within me a feeling that I, too, could do anything — if I only wanted. There was so much to be seen and experienced — and the flow of life was irresistible. Nothing would be needed but a little more nerve, a little more self-assurance, and then to plunge in.... Yes, that was what I felt while you were talking.... And then Gabrielle came toward us along the narrow road from the village, between the acacias. She carried her straw hat in her hand, and she nodded to me. And all my dreams of the future centered in her after that, and once more the whole world seemed fitted into a frame, and yet it was big and beautiful enough.... Why does the color all of a sudden come back into those things? It was practically forgotten, all of it, and now, when she is dead, it comes to life again with a glow that almost scares me.... Oh, it were better not to think of it at all. What's the use? What's the use? (*Pause; he goes to one of the windows*)

JULIAN
(*struggling to overcome his embarrassment*) It is both wise and brave of you to resume your regular activities so promptly.

WEGRAT
Oh, once you have made up your mind to go on living.... There is nothing but work that can help you through this sense of being alone — of being *left* alone.

JULIAN

It seems to me that your grief makes you a little unjust toward — much that is still yours.

WEGRAT
Unjust...? Oh, I didn't mean to. I hope you don't feel hurt, children...! Felix, you understand me fully, don't you? There is so much, from the very beginning, that draws — that lures — that tears the young ones away from us. We have to struggle to keep our children almost from the very moment they arrive — and the struggle is a pretty hopeless one at that. But that's the way of life: they cannot possibly belong to us. And as far as other people are concerned.... Even our friends come into our lives only as guests who rise from the table when they have eaten, and walk out. Like us, they have their own streets, their own affairs. And it's quite natural it should be so.... Which doesn't prevent us from feeling pleased, Julian — sincerely pleased, when one of them finds his way back to us. Especially if it be one on whom we have put great store throughout life. You may be sure of that, Julian. (*They shake hands*) And as long as you remain in Vienna, I shall see you here quite often, I trust. It will give me genuine pleasure.

JULIAN
I'll be sure to come.

MAID (*enters*)
The carriage is here, Professor. (*She goes out*)

WEGRAT
I'm coming. (*To Julian*) You must have a lot to tell me. You were as good as lost. You understand it will interest me to hear all you have done — and still more what you intend to do. Felix told us the other day about some very interesting sketches you had showed him.

JULIAN
I'll go with you, if you care to have me.

WEGRAT
Thanks. But it would be still nicer of you to stay right here and take dinner with us.

JULIAN
Well...

WEGRAT
I'll be through very quickly. To-day I have nothing but a few business matters to dispose of — nothing but signing a few documents. I'll be back in three-quarters of an hour. In the meantime the children will keep you company as they used to in the old days.... Won't you, children? — So you're staying, are you not? Good-by for a little while then. (*He goes out*)
[*Long pause.*

FELIX
Why didn't you go with him?

JULIAN
Your mother was without blame. If any there be, it falls on me alone. I'll tell you all about it.

FELIX (*nods*)

JULIAN
It had been arranged that we were to go away together. Everything was ready. We meant to leave the place secretly because, quite naturally, your mother shrank from any kind of statement or explanation. Our intention was to write and explain after we had been gone a few days. The hour of our start had already been settled. He... who later became her husband, had just gone to Vienna for a couple of days in order to get certain documents. The wedding was to take place in a week. (*Pause*) Our plans were all made. We had agreed on everything. The carriage that was to pick us up a little ways off had already been hired. In the evening we bade each other good-night, fully convinced that we should meet next morning, never to part again. — It turned out differently. — You mustn't keep in mind that it was your mother. You must listen to me as if my story dealt with perfect strangers.... Then you can understand everything.

FELIX
I am listening.

JULIAN
I had come to Kirchau in June, one beautiful Summer morning — with him.... You know about that, don't you? I meant to stay only a few days. But I stayed on and on. More than once I tried to get away while it was still time. But I stayed. (*Smiling*) And with fated inevitability we slipped into sin, happiness, doom, betrayal — and dreams. Yes, indeed, there was more of those than of anything else. And after that last farewell, meant to be for a night only — as I got back to the little inn and started to make things ready for our journey — only then did I for the first time become really conscious of what had happened and was about to happen. Actually, it was almost as if I had just waked up. Only then, in the stillness of that night, as I was standing at the open window, did it grow clear to me that next morning an hour would come by which my whole future must be determined. And then I began to feel... as if faint shiverings had been streaming down my body. Below me I could see the stretch of road along which I had just come. It ran on and on through the country, climbing the hills that cut off the view, and losing itself in the open, the limitless.... It led to thousands of unknown and invisible roads, all of which at that moment remained at my disposal. It seemed to me as if my future, radiant with glory and adventure, lay waiting for me behind those hills — but for me alone. Life was mine — but only this one life. And in order to seize it and enjoy it fully — in order to live it as it had been shaped for me by fate — I needed the carelessness and freedom I had enjoyed until then. And I marveled almost at my own readiness to give away the recklessness of my youth and the fullness of my existence.... And to what purpose? — For the sake of a passion which, after all, despite its ardor and its transports, had begun like many others, and would be destined to end like all of them.

FELIX
Destined to end...? *Must* come to an end?

JULIAN
Yes. Must. The moment I foresaw the end, I had in a measure reached it. To wait for something that must come, means to go through it a thousand times — to go through it helplessly and needlessly and resentfully. This I felt acutely at that moment. And it frightened me. At the same time I felt clearly that I was about to act like a brute and a traitor toward a human being who had given herself to me in full confidence. — But

everything seemed more desirable — not only for me, but for her also — than a slow, miserable, unworthy decline. And all my scruples were submerged in a monstrous longing to go on with my life as before, without duties or ties. There wasn't much time left for consideration. And I was glad of it. I had made up my mind. I didn't wait for the morning. Before the stars had set, I was off.

FELIX
You ran away....

JULIAN
Call it anything you please. — Yes, it was a flight, just as good and just as bad, just as precipitate and just as cowardly as any other — with all the horrors of being pursued and all the joys of escaping. I am hiding nothing from you, Felix. You are still young, and it is even possible that you may understand it better than I can understand it myself to-day. Nothing pulled me back. No remorse stirred within me. The sense of being free filled me with intoxication.... At the end of the first day I was already far away — much farther than any number of milestones could indicate. On that first day her image began to fade away already — the image of her who had waked up to meet painful disillusionment, or worse maybe. The ring of her voice was passing out of my memory.... She was becoming a shadow like others that had been left floating much farther behind me in the past.

FELIX
Oh, it isn't true! So quickly could she not be forgotten. So remorselessly could you not go out in the world. All this is meant as a sort of expiation. You make yourself appear what you are not.

JULIAN
I am not telling you these things to accuse or defend myself. I am simply telling you the truth. And you must hear it. It was your mother, and I am the man who deserted her. And there is something more I am compelled to tell you. On the very time that followed my flight I must look back as the brightest and richest of any I have ever experienced. Never before or after have I reveled to such an extent in the splendid consciousness of my youth and my freedom from restraint. Never have I been so wholly master of my gifts and of my life.... Never have I been a happier man than I was at that very time.

FELIX (*calmly*)
And if she had killed herself?

JULIAN
I believe I should have thought myself worth it — in those days.

FELIX
And so you were, perhaps, at that time. — And she thought of doing it, I am sure. She wanted to put an end to the lies and the qualms, just as hundreds of thousands of girls have done before. But millions fail to do it, and they are the most sensible ones. And I am sure she also thought of telling the truth to him she took to husband. But, of course, the way through life is easier when you don't have to carry a burden of reproach or, what is worse, of forgiveness.

JULIAN

And if she had spoken....

FELIX
Oh, I understand why she didn't. It had been of no use to anybody. And so she kept silent: silent when she got back from the wedding — silent when her child was born — silent when, ten years later, the lover came to her husband's house again — silent to the very last.... Fates of that kind are to be found everywhere, and it isn't even necessary to be — depraved, in order to suffer them or invoke them.

JULIAN
And there are mighty few whom it behooves to judge — or to condemn.

FELIX
I don't presume to do so. And it doesn't even occur to me that I am now to behold deceivers and deceived where, a few hours ago, I could only see people who were dear to me and whose relationships to each other were perfectly pure. And it is absolutely impossible for me to feel myself another man than I have deemed myself until to-day. There is no power in all this truth.... A vivid dream would be more compelling than this story out of bygone days, which you have just told me. Nothing has changed — nothing whatever. The thought of my mother is as sacred to me as ever. And the man in whose house I was born and raised, who surrounded my childhood and youth with care tenderness, and whom my mother — loved.... He means just as much to me now as he ever meant — and perhaps a little more.

JULIAN
And yet, Felix, however powerless this truth may seem to you — there is one thing you can take hold of in this moment of doubt: it was as my son your mother gave birth to you....

FELIX
At a time when you had run away from her.

JULIAN
And as my son she brought you up.

FELIX
In hatred of you.

JULIAN
At first. Later in forgiveness, and finally — don't forget it — in friendship toward me.... And what was in her mind that last night? — Of what did she talk to you? — Of those days when she experienced the greatest happiness that can fall to the share of any woman.

FELIX
As well as the greatest misery.

JULIAN
Do you think it was mere chance which brought those very days back to her mind that last evening?... Don't you think she knew that you would go to me and ask for that picture?... And do you think your wish to see it could have any other meaning than of a final greeting to me from your mother?... Can't you understand that,

Felix?... And in this moment — don't try to resist — you have it before your eyes — that picture you held in your hand yesterday: and your mother is looking at you. — And the glance resting on you, Felix, is the same one that rested on me that passionate and sacred day when she fell into my arms and you were conceived. — And whatever you may feel of doubt or confusion, the truth has now been revealed to you once for all. Thus your mother willed it, and it is no longer possible for you to forget that you are my son.

FELIX
Your son.... That's nothing but a word. And it's cried in a desert. — Although I am looking at you now, and although I know that I am your son, I can't grasp it.

JULIAN
Felix...!

FELIX
Since I learned of this, you have become a stranger to me. (*He turns away*)

CURTAIN

THE FOURTH ACT



The garden belonging to Mr. von Sala's house. At the left is seen the white, one-storied building, fronted by a broad terrace, from which six stone steps lead down into the garden. A wide door with panes of glass leads from the terrace into the drawing-room. A small pool appears in the foreground, surrounded by a semi-circle of young trees. From that spot an avenue of trees runs diagonally across the stage toward the right. At the opening of the avenue, near the pool, stand two columns on which are placed the marble busts of two Roman emperors. A semi-circular stone seat with back support stands under the trees to the right of the pool. Farther back glimpses of the glittering fence are caught through the scanty leafage. Back of the fence, the woods on a gently rising hillside are turning red. The autumnal sky is pale blue. Everything is quiet. The stage remains empty for a few moments.
Sala and Johanna enter by way of the terrace. She is in black. He has on a gray suit and carries a dark overcoat across his shoulders. They descend the steps slowly.

SALA
I think you'll find it rather cool. (*He goes back into the room, picks up a cape lying there, and puts it around Johanna's shoulders; little by little they reach the garden*)

JOHANNA
Do you know what I imagine?... That this day is our own — that it belongs to us alone. We have summoned it, and if we wanted, we could make it stay.... All other people live only as guests in the world to-day. Isn't that so?... The reason is, I suppose, that once I heard you speak of this day.

SALA
Of this...?

JOHANNA
Yes — while mother was still living.... And now it has really come. The leaves are red. The golden mist is lying over the woods. The sky is pale and remote — and the day is even more beautiful, and sadder, than I could ever have imagined. And I am spending it in your garden, and your pool is my mirror. (*She stands looking down into the pool*) And yet we can no more make it stay, this golden day, than the water here can hold my image after I have gone away.

SALA
It seems strange that this clear, mild air should be tinged with a suggestion of winter and snow.

JOHANNA
Why should it trouble you? When that suggestion has become reality here, you are already in the midst of another Spring.

SALA
What do you mean by that?

JOHANNA

Oh, I suppose that where you go they have no winter like ours.

SALA (*pensively*)
No, not like ours. (*Pause*) And you?

JOHANNA
I...?

SALA
What are you going to do, I mean, when I am gone?

JOHANNA
When you are gone...? (*She looks at him, and he stands staring into the distance*) Haven't you gone long ago? And at bottom, are you not far away from me even now?

SALA
What are you saying? I am here with you.... What are you going to do, Johanna?

JOHANNA
I have already told you. Go away — just like you.

SALA (*shakes his head*)

JOHANNA
As soon as possible. I have still the courage left. Who knows what may become of me later, if I stay here alone.

SALA
As long as you are young, all doors stand open, and the world begins outside every one of them.

JOHANNA
But the world is wide and the sky infinite only as long as you are not clinging to anybody. And for that reason I want to go away.

SALA
Away — that's so easily said. But preparations are needed for that purpose, and some sort of a scheme. You use the word as if you merely had to put on wings and fly off into the distance.

JOHANNA
To be determined is — the same as having wings.

SALA
Are you not at all afraid, Johanna?

JOHANNA
A longing free from fear would be too cheap to be worth while.

SALA

Where will it lead you?

JOHANNA
I shall find my way.

SALA
You can choose your way, but not the people that you meet.

JOHANNA
Do you think me ignorant of the fact that I cannot expect only beautiful experiences? What is ugly and mean must also be waiting for me.

SALA
And how are you going to stand it? — Will you be able to stand it at all?

JOHANNA
Of course, I am not going to tell the truth always as I have done to you. I shall have to lie — and I think of it with pleasure. I shall not always be in good spirits, nor always sensible. I shall make mistakes and suffer. That's the way it has to be, I suppose.

SALA
Of all this you are aware in advance, and yet...?

JOHANNA
Yes.

SALA
And why?... Why are you going away, Johanna?

JOHANNA
Why am I going away?... I want a time to come when I must shudder at myself. Shudder as deeply as you can only when nothing has been left untried. Just as you have had to do when you looked back upon your life. Or have you not?

SALA
Oh, many times. But just in such moments of shuddering there is nothing left behind at all — everything is once more present. And the present is the past. (*He sits down on the stone seat*)

JOHANNA
What do you mean by that?

SALA (*covers his eyes with his hand and sits silent*)

JOHANNA
What is the matter? Where are you anyhow?
[*A light wind stirs the leaves and makes many of them drop to the ground.*

SALA

I am a child, riding my pony across the fields. My father is behind and calls to me. At that window waits my mother. She has thrown a gray satin shawl over her dark hair and is waving her hand at me.... And I am a young lieutenant in maneuvers, standing on a hillock and reporting to my colonel that hostile infantry is ambushed behind that wooded piece of ground, ready to charge, and down below us I can see the midday sun glittering on bayonets and buttons.... And I am lying alone in my boat adrift, looking up into the deep-blue Summer sky, while words of incomprehensible beauty are shaping themselves in my mind — words more beautiful than I have ever been able to put on paper.... And I am resting on a bench in the cool park at the lake of Lugano, with Helen sitting beside me; she holds a book with red cover in her hand; over there by the magnolia, Lillie is playing with the light-haired English boy, and I can hear them prattling and laughing.... And I am walking slowly back and forth with Julian on a bed of rustling leaves, and we are talking of a picture which we saw yesterday. And I see the picture: two old sailors with worn-out faces, who are seated on an overturned skiff, their sad eyes directed toward the boundless sea. And I feel their misery more deeply than the artist who painted them; more deeply than they could have felt it themselves, had they been alive.... All this — all of it is there — if I only close my eyes. It is nearer to me than you, Johanna, when I don't see you and you keep quiet.

JOHANNA (*stands looking at him with wistful sympathy*)

SALA

The present — what does it mean anyhow? Are we then locked breast to breast with the moment as with a friend whom we embrace — or an enemy who is pressing us? Has not the word that just rings out turned to memory already? Is not the note that starts a melody reduced to memory before the song is ended? Is your coming to this garden anything but a memory, Johanna? Are not your steps across that meadow as much a matter of the past as are the steps of creatures dead these many years?

JOHANNA

No, it mustn't be like that. It makes me sad.

SALA (*with a return to present things*)

Why?... It shouldn't, Johanna. It is in hours like those we know, that we have lost nothing, and that in reality we cannot lose anything.

JOHANNA

Oh, I wish you had lost and forgotten everything, so that I might be everything to you!

SALA (*somewhat astonished*)

Johanna....

JOHANNA (*passionately*)

I love you. (*Pause*)

SALA

In a few days I shall be gone, Johanna. You know it — you have known it right along.

JOHANNA
I know. Why do you repeat it? Do you think, perhaps, that all at once I may begin to clutch at you like a love-sick thing, dreaming of eternities? — No, that isn't my way — oh, no!... But I want to tell you once at least that I am fond of you. May I not for once? — Do you hear? I love you. And I wish that sometime later on you may hear it just as I am saying it now — at some other moment no less beautiful than this — when we two shall no longer be aware of each other.

SALA
Indeed, Johanna, of one thing you may be sure: that the sound of your voice shall never leave me. — But why should we talk of parting forever? Perhaps we shall meet again sooner or later... in three years... or in five.... (*With a smile*) Then you have become a princess perhaps, and I may be the ruler of some buried city.... Why don't you speak?

JOHANNA (*pulls the cape more closely about her*)

SALA
Do you feel cold?

JOHANNA
Not at all. — But now I must go.

SALA
Are you in such a hurry?

JOHANNA
It is getting late. I must be back before my father gets home.

SALA
How strange! To-day you are hurrying home, fearful of being too late, lest your father get worried. And in a couple of days....

JOHANNA
Then he will no longer be waiting for me. Farewell, Stephan.

SALA
Until to-morrow, then.

JOHANNA
Yes, until to-morrow.

SALA
You'll come through the garden gate, of course?

JOHANNA
Wasn't that a carriage that stopped before the house?

SALA

The doors are locked. Nobody can get out into the garden.

JOHANNA
Good-by, then.

SALA
Until to-morrow.

JOHANNA
Yes. (*She is about to go*)

SALA
Listen, Johanna. — If I should say to you now: stay!

JOHANNA
No, I must go now.

SALA
That was not what I meant.

JOHANNA
What then?

SALA
I mean, if I should beg you to stay — for — a long time?

JOHANNA
You have a peculiar way of jesting.

SALA
I am not jesting.

JOHANNA
Do you forget, then, that you — are going away?

SALA
I am not bound in any respect. There is nothing to prevent me from staying at home if I don’t feel like going away.

JOHANNA
For my sake?

SALA
I didn’t say so. Maybe for my own sake.

JOHANNA
No, you mustn’t give it up. You would never forgive me if I took that away from you.

SALA
Oh, you think so? (*Watching her closely*) And if both of us were to go?

JOHANNA
What?

SALA
If you should risk going along with me? Well, it takes a little courage to do it, of course. But you would probably not be the only woman. The Baroness Golobin is also going along, I hear.

JOHANNA
Are you talking seriously?

SALA
Quite seriously. I ask if you care to go with me on that journey... as my wife, of course, seeing that we have to consider externals like that, too.

JOHANNA
I should...?

SALA
Why does that move you so deeply?

JOHANNA
With you? — With you...?

SALA
Don't misunderstand me, Johanna. That's no reason why you should be tied to me for all time. When we get back, we can bid each other good-by — without the least ado. It is a very simple matter. For all your dreams cannot be fulfilled by me — I know that very well.... You need not give me an answer at once. Hours like these turn too easily into words that are not true the next day. And I hope I may never hear you speak one word of that kind.

JOHANNA (*who has been looking at Sala as if she wanted to drink up every one of his words*) No, I am not saying anything — I am not saying anything.

SALA (*looking long at her*)
You are going to think it over, and you'll let me know to-morrow morning?

JOHANNA
Yes. (*She looks long at him*)

SALA
What is the matter?

JOHANNA
Nothing. — Until to-morrow. Farewell. (*He accompanies her to the garden gate, through which she*

disappears)

SALA (*comes back and stands looking into the pool*)
Just as if I wanted to find her image in it.... What could it be that moved her so deeply?... Happiness?... No, it wasn't happiness.... Why did she look at me like that? Why did she seem to shrink? There was something in her glance like a farewell forever. (*He makes a sudden movement as of fright*) Has it come to that with me?... But how can she know?... Then others must know it too...! (*He stands staring into space; then he ascends the terrace slowly and goes into the drawing-room, from which he returns a few moments later accompanied by Julian*)

JULIAN
And you want to leave all these splendors so soon?

SALA
They'll be here when I come back, I hope.

JULIAN
I hope you will, for the sake of both of us.

SALA
You say that rather distrustingly....

JULIAN
Well, yes — I am thinking of that remarkable article in the Daily Post.

SALA
Concerning what?

JULIAN
What is going on at the Caspian Sea.

SALA
Oh, are the local papers also taking that up?

JULIAN
The conditions in certain regions through which you have to pass seem really to be extremely dangerous.

SALA
Exaggerations. We have better information than that. According to my opinion there is nothing back of those articles but the petty jealousy of English scientists. What you read had been translated from the Daily News. And it's fully three weeks since it appeared there. — Have you seen Felix, by the way?

JULIAN
He was at my house only last night. And this morning I called on the Wegrats. He wanted to have a look at that picture of his mother which I painted twenty-three years ago. — And one thing and another led to my telling him everything.

SALA
Oh, you did? (*Thoughtfully*) And how did he take it?

JULIAN
It stirred him rather more than I had thought possible.

SALA
Well, I hope you didn't expect him to fall into your arms as the recovered son does in the play.

JULIAN
No, of course not. — I told him everything, without any attempt at sparing myself. And for that reason he seemed to feel the wrong done to his mother's husband more strongly than anything else. But that won't last very long. He'll soon understand that, in the higher sense, no wrong has been done at all. People of Wegrat's type are not made to hold actual possession of anything — whether it be wives or children. They mean a refuge, a dwelling place — but never a real home. Can you understand what I mean by that? It is their mission to take into their arms creatures who have been worn out or broken to pieces by some kind of passion. But they never guess whence such creatures come. And while it is granted them to attract and befriend, they never understand whither those creatures go. They exist for the purpose of sacrificing themselves unconsciously, and in such sacrifices they find a happiness that might seem a pretty poor one to others.... You are not saying a word?

SALA
I am listening.

JULIAN
And have no reply to make?

SALA
Oh, well — it is possible to grind out scales quite smoothly even when the fiddle has got a crack....
[*It is growing darker. Felix appears on the terrace.*

SALA
Who is that?

FELIX (*on the terrace*)
It's me. The servant told me...

SALA
Oh, Felix! Glad you came.

FELIX (*coming down into the garden*)
Good evening, Mr. von Sala. — Good evening, Mr. Fichtner.

JULIAN
Good evening, Felix.

SALA

I am delighted to see you.

FELIX
What magnificent old trees!

SALA
Yes, a piece of real woods — all you have to do is to forget the fence. — What brought you anyhow? I didn't expect you until to-morrow morning. Have you really made up your mind already?

JULIAN
Am I in the way?

FELIX
Oh, no. There is nothing secret about it. — I accept your offer, Mr. von Sala, and ask if you would be kind enough to speak to Count Ronsky.

SALA (*shaking Felix by the hand*)

I am glad of it.... (*To Julian*) It has to do with our Asiatic venture.

JULIAN
What? — You intend to join the expedition?

FELIX
Yes.

SALA
Have you already talked it over with your father?

FELIX
I shall do so to-night. — But that's a mere formality. I am determined, provided no other obstacles appear....

SALA
I shall speak to the Count this very day.

FELIX
I don't know how to thank you.

SALA
There is no reason at all. In fact, I don't have to say another word. The Count knows everything he needs to know about you.

VALET (*appearing on the terrace*)
There is a lady asking if you are at home, sir.

SALA
Didn't she give her name? — You'll have to excuse me a moment, gentlemen. (*He goes toward the valet, and both disappear into the house*)

JULIAN
You are going away?

FELIX
Yes. And I am very happy this occasion has offered itself.

JULIAN
Have you also informed yourself concerning the real nature of this undertaking?

FELIX
It means at any rate genuine activity and the opening of wider worlds.

JULIAN
And couldn't those things be found in connection with more hopeful prospects?

FELIX
That's possible. But I don't care to wait.
[*Sala and Irene enter.*

IRENE (*still on the terrace, talking to Sala*)

I couldn't leave Vienna without keeping my promise.

SALA
And I thank you for it, Miss Herms.

IRENE (*descending into the garden with Sala*)
You have a wonderful place here. — How do you do, Julian? Good evening, Lieutenant.

SALA
You should have come earlier, Miss Herms, so that you could have seen it in full sunlight.

IRENE
Why, I was here two hours ago. But it was like an enchanted castle. It was impossible to get in. The bell didn't ring at all.

SALA
Oh, of course! I hope you pardon. If I had had the slightest idea....

IRENE
Well, it doesn't matter. I have made good use of my time. I went on through the woods as far as Neustift and Salmansdorf. And then I got out and followed a road that I remembered since many years ago. (*She looks at Julian*) I rested on a bench where I sat once many, many years ago, with a close friend. (*Smilingly*) Can you guess, Mr. Fichtner? The outlook is wonderful. Beyond the fields you have a perfect view of the whole city as far as the Danube.

SALA (*pointing to the stone seat*)

Won’t you sit down here for a while, Miss Herms?

IRENE
Thanks. (*She raises her lorgnette to study the busts of the two emperors*) It makes one feel quite Roman.... But I hope, gentlemen, I haven’t interrupted any conference.

SALA
Not at all.

IRENE
I have that feeling, however. All of you look so serious. — I think I’ll rather leave.

SALA
Oh, you mustn’t, Miss Herms. — Is there anything more you want to ask me about that affair of ours, Felix?

FELIX
If Miss Herms would pardon me for a minute....

IRENE
Oh, certainly — please!

SALA
You’ll excuse me, Miss Herms....

FELIX
It is a question of what I should do in regard to my present commission. — (*He is still speaking as he goes out with Sala*)

IRENE
What kind of secrets have those two together? What’s going on here anyhow?

JULIAN
Nothing that can be called a secret. That young fellow is also going to join the expedition, I hear. And so they have a lot of things to talk over, of course.

IRENE (*who has been following Felix and Sala with her eyes*) Julian — it’s he.

JULIAN (*remains silent*)

IRENE
You don’t need to answer me. The matter has been in my mind all the time.... The only thing I can’t understand is why I haven’t discovered it before. It is he. — And he is twenty-three. — And I who actually thought when you drove me away: if only he doesn’t kill himself!... And there goes his son.

JULIAN
What does that help me? He doesn’t belong to me.

IRENE

But look at him! He is there — he's alive, and young, and handsome. Isn't that enough? (*She rises*) And I who was ruined by it!

JULIAN
How?

IRENE
Do you understand? Ruined....

JULIAN
I have never suspected it.

IRENE
Well, you couldn't have helped me anyhow. (*Pause*) Good-by. Make an excuse for me, please. Tell them anything you want. I am going away, and I don't want to know anything more.

JULIAN
What's the matter with you? Nothing has changed.

IRENE
You think so? — To me it is as if all these twenty-three years had suddenly undergone a complete change. — Good-by.

JULIAN
Good-by — for a while.

IRENE
For a while? Do you care? — Really? — Do you feel sad, Julian? — Now I am sorry for you again. (*Shaking her head*) Of course, that's the way you are. So what is there to do about it?

JULIAN
Please control yourself. Here they are coming.

SALA (*returns with Felix*)
Now we're all done.

FELIX
Thank you very much. I shall have to leave now.

IRENE
And to-morrow you are already going away again?

FELIX
Yes, Miss Herms.

IRENE
You're also going toward the city now, Lieutenant, are you not? If you don't object, I'll take you along.

FELIX
That's awfully kind of you.

SALA
What, Miss Herms...? This is a short visit indeed.

IRENE
Yes, I have still a few errands to do. For to-morrow I must return to the wilderness. And probably it will be some time before I get to Vienna again. — Well, Lieutenant?

FELIX
Good-by, Mr. Fichtner. And if I shouldn't happen to see you again....

JULIAN
Oh, we'll meet again.

IRENE
Now the people will say: look at the lieutenant with his mamma in tow. (*She gives a last glance to Julian*)

SALA (*accompanies Irene and Felix up the steps to the terrace*)

JULIAN (*remains behind, walking back and forth; after a while he is joined by Sala*) Have you no doubt that your appeal to Count Ronsky will be effective?

SALA
I have already received definite assurances from him, or I should never have aroused any hopes in Felix.

JULIAN
What caused you to do this, Sala?

SALA
My sympathy for Felix, I should say, and the fact that I like to travel in pleasant company.

JULIAN
And did it never occur to you, that the thought of losing him might be very painful to me?

SALA
What's the use of that, Julian? It is only possible to lose what you possess. And you cannot possess a thing to which you have not acquired any right. You know that as well as I do.

JULIAN
Does not, in the last instance, the fact that you need somebody give you a certain claim on him? — Can't you understand, Sala, that he represents my last hope?... That actually I haven't got anything or anybody left but him?... That wherever I turn, I find nothing but emptiness?... That I am horrified by the loneliness awaiting me?

SALA

And what could it help you if he stayed? And even if he felt something like filial tenderness toward you, how could that help you?... How can he or anybody else help you?... You say that loneliness horrifies you?... And if you had a wife by your side to-day, wouldn't you be lonely just the same?... Wouldn't you be lonely even if you were surrounded by children and grandchildren?... Suppose you had kept your money, your fame and your genius — don't you think you would be lonely for all that?... Suppose we were always attended by a train of bacchantes — nevertheless we should have to tread the downward path alone — we, who have never belonged to anybody ourselves. The process of aging must needs be a lonely one for our kind, and he is nothing but a fool who doesn't in time prepare himself against having to rely on any human being.

JULIAN
And do you imagine, Sala, that you need no human being?

SALA
In the manner I have used them they will always be at my disposal. I have always been in favor of keeping at a certain distance. It is not my fault that other people haven't realized it.

JULIAN
In that respect you are right, Sala. For you have never really loved anybody in this world.

SALA
Perhaps not. And how about you? No more than I, Julian.... To love means to live for the sake of somebody else. I don't say that it is a more desirable form of existence, but I do think, at any rate, that you and I have been pretty far removed from it. What has that which one like us brings into the world got to do with love? Though it include all sorts of funny, hypocritical, tender, unworthy, passionate things that pose as love — it isn't love for all that.... Have we ever made a sacrifice by which our sensuality or our vanity didn't profit?... Have we ever hesitated to betray or blackguard decent people, if by doing so we could gain an hour of happiness or of mere lust?... Have we ever risked our peace or our lives — not out of whim or recklessness — but to promote the welfare of someone who had given all to us?... Have we ever denied ourselves an enjoyment unless from such denial we could at least derive some comfort?... And do you think that we could dare to turn to any human being, man or woman, with a demand that any gift of ours be returned? I am not thinking of pearls now, or annuities, or cheap wisdom, but of some piece of our real selves, some hour of our own existence, which we have surrendered to such a being without at once exacting payment for it in some sort of coin. My dear Julian, we have kept our doors open, and have allowed our treasures to be viewed — but prodigal with them we have never been. You no more than I. We may just as well join hands, Julian. I am a little less prone to complain than you are — that's the whole difference.... But I am not telling you anything new. All this you know as well as I do. It is simply impossible for us not to know ourselves. Of course, we try at times conscientiously to deceive ourselves, but it never works. Our follies and rascalities may remain hidden to others — but never to ourselves. In our innermost souls we always know what to think of ourselves. — It's getting cold, Julian. Let's go indoors.
(*They begin to ascend the steps to the terrace*)

JULIAN
All that may be true, Sala. But this much you have to grant me. If there be anybody in the world who has no right to make us pay for the mistakes of our lives, it is a person who has us to thank for his own life.

SALA

There is no question of payment in this. Your son has a mind for essentials, Julian. You have said so yourself. And he feels that to have done nothing for a man but to put him into the world, is to have done very little indeed.

JULIAN

Then, at least, everything must become as it was before he knew anything at all. Once more I shall become to him a human being like anybody else. Then he will not dare to leave me.... I cannot bear it. How have I deserved that he should run away from me?... And even if all that I have held for good and true within myself — even if, in the end, my very fondness for this young man, who is my son — should prove nothing but self-delusion — yet I love him now.... Do you understand me, Sala? I love him, and all I ask is that he may believe it before I must lose him forever....

[*It grows dark. The two men pass across the terrace and enter the drawing-room. The stage stands empty a little while. In the meantime the wind has risen somewhat. Johanna enters by the avenue of trees from the right and goes past the pool toward the terrace. The windows of the drawing-room are illumined. Sala has seated himself at a table. The valet enters the room and serves him a glass of wine. Johanna stops. She is apparently much excited. Then she ascends two of the steps to the terrace. Sala seems to hear a noise and turns his head slightly. When she sees this, Johanna hurries down again and stops beside the pool. There she stands looking down into the water.*

CURTAIN

THE FIFTH ACT



THE GARDEN AT the Wegrats'.

REUMANN (*sits at a small table and writes something in his notebook*)

JULIAN (*enters quickly by way of the veranda*)
Is it true, Doctor?

REUMANN (*rising*)
Yes, it's true.

JULIAN
She has disappeared?

REUMANN
Yes, she has disappeared. She has been gone since yesterday afternoon. She has left no word behind, and she has taken nothing at all with her — she has simply gone away and never returned.

JULIAN
But what can have happened to her?

REUMANN
We have not been able to guess even. Perhaps she has lost her way and will come back. Or she has suddenly made up her mind — if we only knew to what!

JULIAN
Where are the others?

REUMANN
We agreed to meet here again at ten. I visited the various hospitals and other places where it might be possible to find some trace.... I suppose the professor has made a report to the police by this time.

FELIX (*enters quickly*)
Nothing new?

REUMANN
Nothing.

JULIAN (*shakes hands with Felix*)

REUMANN
From where do you come?

FELIX

I went to see Mr. von Sala.

REUMANN
Why?

FELIX
I thought it rather possible that he might have a suspicion, or be able to give us some kind of direction. But he knows nothing at all. That was perfectly clear. And if he had known anything — had known anything definite — he would have told me. I am sure of that. He was still in bed when I called on him. I suppose he thought I had come about my own matter. When he heard that Johanna had disappeared, he turned very pale.... But he doesn't know anything.

WEGRAT (*enters*)
Anything?
[*All the others shake their heads. Julian presses his hand.*

WEGRAT (*sitting down*)
They asked me to give more details, something more tangible to go by. But what is there to give?... I have nothing.... The whole thing is a riddle to me. (*Turning to Julian*) In the afternoon she went out for a short walk as usual.... (*To Felix*) Was there anything about her that attracted attention?... It seems quite impossible to me that she could have had anything in mind when she left the house — that she could know already — that she was going away forever.

FELIX
Perhaps though....

WEGRAT
Of course, she was very reserved — especially of late, since the death of her mother.... I wonder if it could be that?... Would you think that possible, Doctor?

REUMANN (*shrugs his shoulders*)

FELIX
Did any one of us really know her? And who takes a real interest in another person anyhow?

REUMANN
It is apparently fortunate that such is the case. Otherwise we should all go mad from pity or loathing or anxiety. (*Pause*) Now I must get around to my patients. There are a few calls that cannot be postponed. I shall be back by dinner-time. Good-by for a while. (*He goes out*)

WEGRAT
To think that you can watch a young creature like her grow up — can see the child turn into girl, and then into a young lady — can speak hundreds of thousands of words to her.... And one day she rises from the table, puts on hat and coat, and goes... and you have no idea as to whether she has slipped away — if into nothingness or into a new life.

FELIX
But whatever may have happened, father — she wanted to get away from us. And in that fact, I think, we should find a certain consolation.

WEGRAT (*shakes his head in perplexity*)
Everything is fluttering away — willingly or unwillingly — but away it goes.

FELIX
Father, we can't tell what may have happened. It's conceivable, at least, that Johanna may have formed some decision which she does not carry out. Perhaps she will come back in a few hours, or days.

WEGRAT
You believe... you think it possible, do you?

FELIX
Possible — yes. But if she shouldn't come — of course, father, I shall give up the plan of which I told you yesterday. Under circumstances like these I couldn't think of going so far away from you for such a long time.

WEGRAT (*to Julian*)
And now he's going to sacrifice himself for my sake!

FELIX
Perhaps I could arrange to have myself transferred here.

WEGRAT
No, Felix, you know very well that I couldn't accept such a thing.

FELIX
But it's no sacrifice. I assure you, father, that I stay with you only because I *can't* go away from you now.

WEGRAT
Oh, yes, Felix, you can — you will be able. And you are not to stay here for my sake — you mustn't. I could never be sure that it would prove of any help to me to have you give up a plan which you have taken hold of with such enthusiasm. I think it would be inexcusable of you to draw back, and wicked of me to permit it. You must be happy at having found a way at last, by which you may reach all you have longed for. It makes me happy, too, Felix. If you missed this opportunity, you would regret it all your life.

FELIX
But so much may have changed since yesterday — such a tremendous lot — for you and for me.

WEGRAT
For me, perhaps.... But never mind. I won't stand it — I will not accept such a sacrifice. Of course, I might accept it, if I could find it of any special advantage to myself. But I shouldn't have you any more than if you were gone away... less... not at all. This fate that has descended on us must not add to its inherent power what is still worse — that it makes us do in our confusion what is against our own natures. Sometime we always

get over every disaster, no matter how frightful it be. But whatever we do in violation of our innermost selves can never be undone. (*Turning to Julian*) Isn't that true, Julian?

JULIAN
You are absolutely right.

FELIX
Thanks, father. I feel grateful that you make it so easy for me to agree with you.

WEGRAT
That's good, Felix.... During the weeks you will remain in Europe we shall be able to talk over a lot of things — more perhaps than in the years gone by. Indeed, how little people know about each other!... But I am getting tired. We stayed awake all night.

FELIX
Won't you rest a while, father?

WEGRAT
Rest.... You'll stay at home, Felix, won't you?

FELIX
Yes, I shall wait right here. What else is there to do?

WEGRAT
I'm racking my brain until it's near bursting.... Why didn't she say anything to me? Why have I known so little about her? Why have I kept so far away from her? (*He goes out*)

FELIX
How that man has been belied — all his life long — by all of us.

JULIAN
There is in this world no sin, no crime, no deception, that cannot be atoned. Only for what has happened here, there should be no expiation and no forgetfulness, you think?

FELIX
Can it be possible that you don't understand?... Here a lie has been eternalized. There is no getting away from it. And she who did it was my mother — and it was you who made her do it — and the lie am I, and such I must remain as long as I am passing for that which I am not.

JULIAN
Let us proclaim the truth then, Felix. — I shall face any judge that you may choose, and submit to any verdict passed on me. — Must I alone remain condemned forever? Should I alone, among all that have erred, never dare to say: "It is atoned"?

FELIX
It is too late. Guilt can be wiped out by confession only while the guilty one is still able to make restitution. You ought to know yourself, that this respite expired long ago.

SALA (*enters*)

FELIX
Mr. von Sala! — Have you anything to tell us?

SALA
Yes. — Good morning, Julian. — No, stay, Julian. I am glad to have a witness. (*To Felix*) Are you determined to join the expedition?

FELIX
I am.

SALA
So am I. But it is possible that one of us must change his mind.

FELIX
Mr. von Sala...?

SALA
It would be a bad thing to risk finding out that you have started on a journey of such scope with one whom you would prefer to shoot dead if you knew him completely.

FELIX
Where is my sister, Mr. von Sala?

SALA
I don’t know. Where she is at this moment, I don’t know. But last evening, just before you arrived, she had left me for the last time.

FELIX
Mr. von Sala....

SALA
Her farewell words to me were: Until to-morrow. You can see that I had every reason to be surprised this morning, when you appeared at my house. Permit me furthermore to tell you, that yesterday, of all days, I asked Johanna to become my wife — which seemed to agitate her very much. In telling you this, I have by no means the intention of smoothing over things. For my question implied no desire on my part to make good any wrong I might have done. It was apparently nothing but a whim — like so much else. There is here no question of anything but to let you know the truth. This means that I am at your disposal in any manner you may choose. — I thought it absolutely necessary to say all this before we were brought to the point of having to descend into the depths of the earth together, or, perhaps, to sleep in the same tent.

FELIX (*after a long pause*)
Mr. von Sala... we shall not have to sleep in the same tent.

SALA
Why not?

FELIX
Your journey will not last that long.
[*A very long pause ensues.*

SALA
Oh... I understand. And are you sure of that?

FELIX
Perfectly. (*Pause*}

SALA
And did Johanna know it?

FELIX
Yes.

SALA
I thank you. — Oh, you can safely take my hand. The matter has been settled in the most chivalrous manner possible. — Well?... It is not customary to refuse one's hand to him who is already down.

FELIX (*gives his hand to Sala; then he says*)
And where can she be?

SALA
I don't know.

FELIX
Didn't she give you any hint at all?

SALA
None whatever.

FELIX
But have you no conjecture? Has she perhaps established any connections — abroad? Had she any friends at all, of which I don't know?

SALA
Not to my knowledge.

FELIX
Do you think that she is still alive?

SALA
I can't tell.

FELIX
Are you not *willing* to say anything more, Mr. von Sala?

SALA
I am not *able* to say anything more. I have nothing left to say. Farewell, and good luck on your trip. Give my regards to Count Ronsky.

FELIX
But we are not seeing each other for the last time?

SALA
Who can tell?

FELIX (*holding out his hand to Sala*)

I must hurry to my father. I think it my duty to let him know what I have just learned from you.

SALA (*nods*)

FELIX (*to Julian*)
Good-by. (*He goes out*)
[*Julian and Sala start to leave together.*

JULIAN (*as Sala suddenly stops*)
Why do you tarry? Let's get away.

SALA
It is a strange thing to *know*. A veil seems to spread in front of everything.... "Away with you!" — But I don't care to submit to it as long as I am still here — if it be only for another hour....

JULIAN
Do you believe it then?

SALA (*looking long at Julian*)
Do I believe it...? He behaved rather nicely, that son of yours.... "We shall not have to sleep in the same tent."... Not bad! I might have said it myself....

JULIAN
But why don't you come? Have you perhaps something more to tell after all?

SALA
That's the question I must put to you, Julian.

JULIAN
Sala?

SALA
Because I didn't say anything about a peculiar hallucination I experienced just before coming here. I imagine it was....

JULIAN

Please, speak out!

SALA
What do you think of it? Before I left my house — just after Felix had gone — I went down into my garden — that is to say, I ran through it — in a remarkable state of excitement, as you may understand. And as I passed by the pool, it was exactly as if I had seen on the bottom of it....

JULIAN
Sala!

SALA
There is a blue-greenish glitter on the water, and besides, the shadow of the beech tree falls right across it early in the morning. And by a strange coincidence Johanna said yesterday: “The water can no more hold my image....” That was, in a way, like challenging fate.... And as I passed by the pool, it was as if... the water had retained her image just the same.

JULIAN
Is that true?

SALA
True... or untrue... what is that to me? It could be of interest to me only if I were to remain in this world another year — or another hour at least.

JULIAN
You mean to...?

SALA
Of course, I do. Would you expect me to wait for it? That would be rather painful, I think. (*To Julian, with a smile*) From whom are you now going to get your cues, my dear friend? Yes, it’s all over now.... And what has become of it?... Where are the *thermæ* of Caracalla? Where is the park at Lugano?... Where is my nice little house?... No nearer to me, and no farther away, than those marble steps leading down to mysterious depths.... Veils in front of everything.... Perhaps your son will discover if the three-hundred and twelfth be the last one — and if not, it won’t give him much concern anyhow.... Don’t you think he has been acting rather nicely?... I have somehow the impression that a better generation is growing up — with more poise and less brilliancy. — Send your regards to heaven, Julian.

JULIAN (*makes a movement to accompany him*)

SALA (*gently but firmly*)
You stay here, Julian. This is the end of our dialogue. Farewell. (*He goes out quickly*)

FELIX (*entering rapidly*)
Is Mr. von Sala gone? My father wanted to talk to him. — And you are still here?... Why did Mr. von Sala go? What did he tell you? — Johanna...! Johanna...?

JULIAN

She is dead... she has drowned herself in the pool.

FELIX (*with a cry of dismay*)
Where did he go?

JULIAN
I don't think you can find him.

FELIX
What is he doing?

JULIAN
He is paying... while it's time....

WEGRAT (*enters from the veranda*)

FELIX (*runs to meet him*)
Father....

WEGRAT
Felix! What has happened?

FELIX
We must go to Sala's house, father.

WEGRAT
Dead...?

FELIX
Father! (*He takes hold of Wegrat's hand and kisses it*) My father!

JULIAN (*has left the room slowly in the meantime*)

WEGRAT
Must things of this kind happen to make that word sound as if I had heard it for the first time...?

CURTAIN

Intermezzo (1904)

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

Original German Title: 'Zwischenspiel'

Translated by Edwin Björkman, 1915

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PERSONS



Amadeus Adams, A musical conductor
Cecilia Adams-Ortenburg, His wife, an opera singer
Peter, Their child, five years old
Albert Rhon
Marie, His wife
Sigismund, Prince Maradas-Lohsenstein
Countess Frederique Mooshei, An opera singer
Governess (At the Adamses)
Chambermaid (At the Adamses)

The scene is laid in Vienna at the present day.

THE FIRST ACT



THE STUDY OF Amadeus. The walls are painted in dark gray, with a very simple frieze. A door in the background leads to a veranda. On either side of this door is a window. Through the door one sees the garden, to which three steps lead down from the veranda. A cabinet stands between the door and the window at the right; a music-stand holds a corresponding position to the left of the door. Antique has-reliefs are hung above the cabinet as well as the stand. The main entrance is on the right side in the foreground. Farther back at the right is a door leading to Cecilia's room. A door finished like the rest of the wall leads to the room of Amadeus at the left. A tall book case, with a bust of Verrochio on top of it, stands against the right wall. In the corner back of it are several columns with tall vases full of flowers. A fireplace occupies the foreground at the left. Above it is a large mirror. On the mantelshelf stands a French clock of simple design. A table surrounded by chairs is placed in front of the fireplace. Farther back along the same wall are shelves piled with sheet music, and above them engravings of Schumann, Brahms, Mozart, and other composers. A bust of Beethoven occupies the farthermost corner at the left. Halfway down the stage, nearer the left wall, stands a piano with a piano stool in front of it. An armchair has been moved up close to the piano on the side toward the public. A writing desk holds a similar position at the right. Back of it are an easy-chair and a couch, the latter having been moved close to the table.

AMADEUS (*thirty years old, slender, with dark, smooth hair; his movements are quick, with a suggestion of restlessness; he wears a gray business suit of elegant cut, but not well cared for; he has a trick of taking hold of the lapel of his sack coat with his left hand and turning it back; he is seated at the piano, accompanying Frederique*)

FREDERIQUE (*twenty-eight, is dressed in a bright gray tailor-made suit and a red satin waist; wears a broad-brimmed straw hat, very fashionable; her hair is blonde, of a reddish tint; her whole appearance is very dainty; she is singing an aria from the opera "Mignon"*) "Ha-ha-ha! Is 't true, really true?" (*While singing she is all the time making a motion as if she were beating the dust out of her riding suit with a crop*)

AMADEUS (*accompanying himself as he gives her the cue*) "Yes, you may laugh. I am a fool to ruin my horse..."

FREDERIQUE
"Maybe you would like..."

AMADEUS (*nervously*)
Oh, wait!... You don't know yet why I have ruined my horse.... "To ruin my horse for a quicker sight of you..."

FREDERIQUE (*with the same gesture as before*)
"Maybe you would like me to weep?"

AMADEUS
"Oh, I regret already that I came."

FREDERIQUE (*as before*)
"Well, why...."

AMADEUS
G sharp!

FREDERIQUE (*as before*)
"Well, why don't you go back? Soon enough I shall see you again."

AMADEUS
You should say that ironically, not tenderly. "Soon enough I shall see you again...."

FREDERIQUE (*as before*)
"Soon enough I shall see you again...."

AMADEUS
Not angrily, Countess, but ironically.

FREDERIQUE
Call me Frederique, and not Countess, when you are working with me.

AMADEUS
Now, that's the tone Philine should use. Hold on to it.... And that's the right look, too.... If you could do that on the stage, you might almost be an artist.

FREDERIQUE
Oh, mercy, I have sung Philine more than twenty times already.

AMADEUS
But not here, Freder... Countess. And not when Mrs. Adams-Ortenburg was singing the part of Mignon. (*He leans forward so that he can look out into the garden*)

FREDERIQUE
No, she isn't coming yet. (*With a smile*) Perhaps the rehearsal isn't over.

AMADEUS (*rising*)
Perhaps not.

FREDERIQUE
Is it true that Mrs. Adams-Ortenburg has been requested to sing in Berlin next Fall?

AMADEUS
Nothing has been settled yet. (*He goes to the window at the right*) If you'll permit.... (*Opens the window*)

FREDERIQUE
What a splendid day! And how fragrant the roses are. It is almost like....

AMADEUS

Almost like Tremezzo — yes, I know.

FREDERIQUE
How can you — as you have never been there?

AMADEUS
But you have told me enough about it. A villa standing at the edge of the water — radiantly white — with marble steps leading straight down to the blue sea.

FREDERIQUE
Yes. And sometimes, on very hot nights, I sleep in the park, right on the sward, under a plane tree.

AMADEUS
That plane tree is famous. — But time is flying. It would be better to go on with the singing. (*He seats himself at the piano again*) The polonaise — if you please, Countess. (*He begins the accompaniment*)

FREDERIQUE (*singing*)
"Titania, airiest queen of fairies,
Has descended from her blue cloud throne,
And her way across the world is wending
More quickly than the bird or lightning flash..."

AMADEUS (*interrupts his playing and lets his head sink forward*) No, no — it's no use!... Please tell the director that he will have to look after your part himself. As for me, I have certain regards even for people who go to the opera in Summer. They should not be forced to accept *anything*. Tell the director, please, that I send him my regards and that — there are more important things to occupy my time. (*He closes the score*)

FREDERIQUE (*quite amicably*)

I believe it. How's your opera getting along?

AMADEUS
For the Lord's sake, please don't pretend to be interested in things of that kind! Why, nobody expects it of you.

FREDERIQUE
Will it soon be finished?

AMADEUS
Finished...? How could it be, do you think? I have to conduct two nights a week at least, and there are rehearsals in the morning, not to mention singers that have to be coached.... Do you think a man can sit down after an hour like *this* and invite his muse?

FREDERIQUE
After an hour like *this*...? I don't think you feel quite at your ease with me, Amadeus.

AMADEUS

Not at my ease? I? With you? — I don't think you have imagined in your most reckless moments, Countess, that my wife might have anything to fear from you.

FREDERIQUE
You are determined to misunderstand me. (*She has gone to the fireplace and turns now to face Amadeus*) You know perfectly well why you pretend to be cross with me. Because you are in love with me.

AMADEUS (*looks straight ahead and goes on playing*)

FREDERIQUE
And that chord proves nothing to the contrary.

AMADEUS
That chord.... Tell me rather what kind of chord it is. (*He repeats it in a fury*)

FREDERIQUE
A flat major.

AMADEUS (*in a tone of boredom*)

G major — of course.

FREDERIQUE (*close by him, with a smile*)
Don't let that semi-tone spoil our happiness.

AMADEUS (*rises, goes toward the background and looks out into the garden*)

FREDERIQUE
Is it your wife?

AMADEUS
No, my little boy is playing out there. (*He stands at the window, waving his hand at somebody outside; pause*)

FREDERIQUE
You take life too hard, Amadeus.

AMADEUS (*still at the window, but turning toward Frederique*) I can't lie — and I don't want to. Which is not the same as taking life hard.

FREDERIQUE
Can't lie...? And yet you have been away from your wife for months at a time — haven't you? And your wife came here while you were still conducting somewhere abroad, didn't she?... So that....

AMADEUS
Those are matters which you don't quite comprehend, Countess. (*He looks again toward the main entrance*)

FREDERIQUE

No, your wife can’t be here yet. She won’t give up her walk on a wonderful day like this.

AMADEUS
What you have in mind now is pretty mean, Frederique.

FREDERIQUE
Why so? Of course, I know she takes a walk with you, too, now and then.

AMADEUS
Yes, when my time permits. And often she goes out with Sigismund. To-day she’s probably with him — and that’s what you wanted to bring home to me, of course.

FREDERIQUE
Why should I? You know it, don’t you? And I assure you, it has never occurred to me to see anything wrong in it. He’s a friend of yours.

AMADEUS
More than that — or less. He used to be my pupil.

FREDERIQUE
I didn’t know that.

AMADEUS
Ten years ago, while still a mere youngster, I used to live in his father’s palace. It’s hard to tell where I might have been to-day, had it not been for old Prince Lohsenstein. You see, we men have generally another kind of youth to look back at than you...

FREDERIQUE
... women artists.

AMADEUS
No, countesses, I meant to say. For three years I spent every summer in the palace at Krumau. And there — for the first time in my life — I could work in peace, all by myself, with nothing more to do than to instruct Sigismund.

FREDERIQUE
Did he want to become a pianist?

AMADEUS
Not exactly. He wanted to join some monastic order.

FREDERIQUE
No? Is that really true? — Oh, it’s queer how people change!

AMADEUS
They don’t as much as you think. He has remained a man of serious mind.

FREDERIQUE
And yet he plays dance music so charmingly...?

AMADEUS
Why shouldn't he? A good waltz and a good hymn are just as acceptable to the powers above.

FREDERIQUE
How delightful those evenings in your house used to be! No farther back than last winter.... The Count and I frequently talk of them. — Have you ceased to invite Prince Sigismund, as you have me?

AMADEUS
He was here only a fortnight ago, my dear Countess — and spent the whole evening with us. We had supper in the summer-house, and then we came in here and sat chatting for a long while, and finally he improvised some variations on the Cagliostro Waltzes before he left. — And what my wife and he say to each other during their walk, when I am not with them, will no more be hidden from me than I would hide from her what you and I have been talking of here. That's how my wife and I feel toward each other — if you'll please understand, Frederique!

FREDERIQUE
But there are things one simply *can't* say to each other.

AMADEUS
There can be no secrets between people like my wife and myself.

FREDERIQUE
Oh, of course... but then... what you have been saying to me will be only a small part of what you must tell your wife to-day, Amadeus. Good-by.... (*She holds out her hand to him*)

AMADEUS
What's in your mind now, Frederique?

FREDERIQUE
Why resist your fate? Is it so very repulsive after all? What you are to me, nobody else has ever been!

AMADEUS
And you want me to believe that?

FREDERIQUE
I shall not insist on it. But it is true nevertheless. Good-by now. Until to-morrow, Amadeus. Life is really much easier than you think.... It might be so very pleasant — and so it shall be! (*She goes out*)

AMADEUS (*seats himself at the piano again and strikes a few notes*) It is getting serious... or amusing perhaps...? (*He shakes his head*)

ALBERT RHON (*enters; he is of medium height; his black hair, slightly streaked with gray, is worn long; he is rather carelessly dressed*)

AMADEUS
Oh, is that you, Albert? How are you?

ALBERT
I have come to ask how you are getting along with our opera, Amadeus. Have you done anything?

AMADEUS
No.

ALBERT
Again nothing?

AMADEUS
I doubt whether I can get a chance here. We'll have to wait until the season is over. I have too much to do. We are now putting on "Mignon" with new people in some of the parts....

ALBERT
If I'm not very much mistaken, I saw Philine float by — with a rather intoxicated look in her eyes.... Oh, have I put my foot into it again? I beg your pardon!

AMADEUS (*turning away from him*)
That's right. She was here. Oh, that damned business of private rehearsals! But I hope it won't last much longer. The coming Winter is going to decide my future once for all. I have already got my leave of absence.

ALBERT
So you have made up your mind about that tour?

AMADEUS
Yes, I shall be gone for two months this time.

ALBERT
Within Germany only?

AMADEUS
I'll probably take in a few Italian cities also. Yes, my dear fellow, they know more about me abroad than here. I shall conduct my Third Symphony, and perhaps also my Fourth.

ALBERT
Have you got that far already?

AMADEUS
No. But I have hopes of the Summer. Once more I mean to do some real work.

ALBERT
Well, it's about time. — I have made out the schedule for our walking tour, by the by. And I brought along the map. Look here. We start from Niederdorf, and then by way of Plätzwiesen to Schluderbach; then to Cortina; then through the Giau Pass to Caprile; then by way of the Fedaja....

AMADEUS
I leave all that to you. I rely entirely on you.

ALBERT
Then it's settled that we'll don knapsack and alpenstock once more, to wander through the country as we used to do when we were young...?

AMADEUS
Yes, and I am looking forward to it with a great deal of pleasure.

ALBERT
You need simply to pull yourself together — a few weeks of mountain air and quiet will get you out of this.

AMADEUS
Oh, I haven't got into anything in particular. I am a little nervous. That's all.

ALBERT
Can't you see, Amadeus, how you have to force yourself in order to use this evasion toward me, who, of course, has no right whatever to demand any frankness? Can't you see how you are wasting a part of your mental energy, so to speak, on this slight disingenuousness? No, dissimulation is utterly foreign to your nature, as I have always told you. If you should ever get to the point where you had to deceive one who was near and dear to you, that would be the end of you.

AMADEUS
Your worry is quite superfluous! Haven't you known us long enough — me and Cecilia — to know that our marriage is based, above all else, on absolute frankness?

ALBERT
Many have good intentions, but their courage often deserts them at the critical moment.

AMADEUS
We have never yet kept anything hidden from each other.

ALBERT
Because so far you have had nothing to confess.

AMADEUS
Oh, a great deal, perhaps, which other people keep to themselves. Our common life has not been without its complications. We have had to be parted from each other for months at a time. I have had to rehearse in private with other singers than Philine, and (*with an air of superiority*) other men than Prince Sigismund must have discovered that Cecilia is pretty.

ALBERT
I haven't said a word about Cecilia.

AMADEUS
And besides, it would be quite hopeless for Cecilia or me to keep any secrets. We know each other too well

— I don’t think two people ever existed who understood each other so completely as we do.

ALBERT
I can imagine a point where the understanding would have to end, and everything else with it.

AMADEUS
Everything else maybe — but not the understanding.

ALBERT
Oh, well! If nothing is left but the understanding, that means the beginning of the end.

AMADEUS
Those are — chances that every human being must resign himself to take.

ALBERT
You don’t talk like one who has resigned himself, however, but like one who has made up his mind.

AMADEUS
Who can be perfectly sure of himself or of anybody else? We two, at any rate, are not challenging fate by feeling too secure.

ALBERT
Oh, when it comes to that, my dear fellow — fate always regards itself challenged — by doubt no less than by confidence.

AMADEUS
To be safe against any surprise brings a certain sense of tranquillity anyhow.

ALBERT
A little more tranquillity would produce a decision to avoid anything that might endanger an assured happiness.

AMADEUS
Do you think anything is to be won by that kind of avoidance? Don’t you feel rather, that the worst and most dangerous of all falsehoods is to resist temptation with a soul full of longing for it? And that it is easier to go unscathed through adventures than through desires?

ALBERT
Adventures...! Is it actually necessary, then, to live through them? A painter who has risen above pot-boiling, and who has left the follies of youth behind him, can be satisfied with a single model for all the figures that are created out of his dreams — and one who knows how to live may have all the adventures he could ever desire within the peaceful precincts of his own home. He can experience them just as fully as anybody else, but without waste of time, without unpleasantness, without danger. And if he only possess a little imagination, his wife may bear him nothing but illegitimate children without being at all aware of it.

AMADEUS
It’s an open question whether you have the right to force such a part on anybody whom you respect.

ALBERT
It is not wise to let people know what they mean to you. I have put this thought into an aphorism:
If you grasp me, you rasp me;
If I know you, I own you.

MARIE (*entering from the garden with little Peter*)
Peter wants me absolutely to come in. I wanted to wait for Cecilia in the garden.

AMADEUS
How are you, Marie?

MARIE
I'm not disturbing you, I hope?

GOVERNESS (*comes from the garden with the intention of taking the boy away*) Peter!

PETER
No, I want to stay with the grown-ups.

AMADEUS
Yes, let him be with us for a while.

GOVERNESS (*returns to the veranda, where she remains visible*)

MARIE
Well, have you been working a lot?

AMADEUS
Oh, we have just been talking.

ALBERT
Do you know why she asks? Because she is in love with Mr. von Rabagas.

AMADEUS
With whom?

ALBERT
Don't you remember him? He's that interesting young chap who appears in the first act as one of the King's attendants. She used, at least, to fall in love only with the heroes of my plays, but nowadays she can't even resist the subordinate characters.

AMADEUS
That should make you proud.

ALBERT
Proud, you say? But at times you can't help regretting that you must put all the beauties and virtues of the world into the figures you create, so that you have nothing but your wee bit of talent left to get along with

personally.

CECILIA (*enters from the right*)

PETER
There's mamma!

CECILIA
Good afternoon. (*She shakes hands with everybody*) How are you, Marie? This is awfully nice. If I had only known.... I went for a short walk. It's such a wonderful day. — Well, Peter (*kissing him*), have you had your meal yet?

PETER
Yes.

GOVERNESS (*entering from the veranda*)
Good afternoon, Madame. Peter hasn't had his nap yet.

MARIE
Does he still have to sleep in the daytime? Our two children have quit entirely.

ALBERT
Instead they play a most exciting game every afternoon — one invented by themselves. They call it "drums and bugles."

MARIE
You must come and see us soon, Peter, so that you can learn to play that game.

PETER
I've got a music-box, and I'll take it along so we can make more noise.

CECILIA
Now you have to go. But first you must say good-by nicely.

PETER
I'll say "adieu." Good-by is so common.
[*Everybody laughs. Peter goes out with the Governess. Marie and Cecilia move slowly toward the fireplace and sit down in front of it.*

MARIE
Of course, I have come to ask for something.

CECILIA
Well, go on.

MARIE
There's to be a concert at which they want you to assist.

CECILIA
This season?

MARIE
Yes. But it will be in the country, not in the city... for a charitable purpose, of course. The committee would be so happy if you would sing two or three songs.

CECILIA
I think I can.

MARIE
And I shall feel very grateful, too.

CECILIA
Don't you find undertakings of that kind a lot of trouble?

MARIE
Well, you must have something to do. If I had any gifts like the rest of you, I am sure I should never bother with "people's kitchens" or "charitable teas" — and then, I suppose, I should feel more indifferent about people, too.

CECILIA (*with a smile*)
About *people*, too?

MARIE
Oh, I didn't mean it that way.

ALBERT
You see, Marie, there is something like the charm of meadows and fields in your sweet prattle, and you should never desert it for the thickets of psychological speculations. — Come on, child. These people want their dinner.

CECILIA
No, we won't eat for an hour yet.

AMADEUS
We generally work a little before we eat. To-day we might run through the songs for that concert, for instance.

CECILIA
That would suit me perfectly.

MARIE
Oh, I feel *so* thankful to you, Cecilia!

CECILIA
And when shall we see each other again?

ALBERT
Oh, that reminds me! We have just been talking about the Summer. Amadeus and I mean to go on a walking tour. How would it be if you two were to go somewhere with the children — some place in the Tirol, say — and wait for us there?

MARIE
Oh, that would be fine!

CECILIA
Did you hear that, Amadeus?

AMADEUS (*who has been standing a little way off*)
Certainly. It would be very nice.... You can wait for us in the Tirol.

CECILIA
Could you come and see me to-morrow afternoon, Marie? Then we might settle the matter.

MARIE
Yes, indeed. I am always glad when you can spare me a little of your time. — Until to-morrow, then!

ALBERT
Good-by. (*He and Marie go out*)

AMADEUS (*is walking to and fro*)

CECILIA (*who is sitting on the couch, follows him with her eyes*)

AMADEUS (*after a turn to the window and back, speaking in a peculiarly dry tone*) Well, how did it go? Have you got the finale into shape at last?

CECILIA
Oh, in a manner.

AMADEUS
The day before yesterday it had not yet been brought up to the proper level. I find, for one thing, that they don't let you assert yourself sufficiently. Your voice should be floating above the rest, instead of being submerged in the crowd.

CECILIA
Won't you come to the rehearsal to-morrow — just once more — if you can spare the time?

AMADEUS
Would it please you...?

CECILIA
I always feel more certain of myself when you are within reach. You know that, don't you?

AMADEUS

Yes — I'll come. I'll call off my appointments with Neumann and the Countess.

CECILIA
If it isn't too great a sacrifice....

AMADEUS (*with assumed brusqueness*)
Oh, I can make her come in the afternoon.

CECILIA
But then there will be no time left for your *own* work. No, better let it be.

AMADEUS
What had we better let be?

CECILIA
Don't come to the rehearsal to-morrow.

AMADEUS
Just as you say, Cecilia. I won't intrude, of course. But a moment ago you said that you felt more certain of yourself when I was within reach. And as far as my work is concerned, I don't think — Albert and I were just talking of it — nothing will come of it until the season is over.

CECILIA
That's what I suspected.

AMADEUS
But during the summer I'll complete my Fourth. I must have something new to conduct this year. And it's only a question of the final passages, for that matter. All the rest is as good as finished — in my mind at least.

CECILIA
It's a long time since you let me hear anything of it.

AMADEUS
It hasn't quite reached the point where it can be played. But, of course, you know the principal themes... the Allegro... and then the Intermezzo.... (*He goes to the piano and strikes a few notes*)

CECILIA
So you are going next November?

AMADEUS
Yes, for three months.

CECILIA
And during October I shall be in Berlin.

AMADEUS
Oh... is there any news in that matter?

CECILIA
Yes, I have practically closed. Reichenbach came to see me at the opera-house. I'm to appear in three parts. As Carmen under all circumstances. The other two are left to my own choice.

AMADEUS
And what do you...?

CECILIA
Tatyana, I suppose. I have heard that they have such a splendid Onyegin.

AMADEUS
Yes, Wedius. I know him. He was in Dresden when I was there. — Carmen, then, and Tatyana, and...?

CECILIA
I am still considering.... Perhaps we might talk it over?

AMADEUS
Of course. (*Pause*)

CECILIA
It's going to be a busy Winter.

AMADEUS
Rather. We won't see much of each other.

CECILIA
We'll have to correspond.

AMADEUS
As we have done before.

CECILIA
We're used to it.

AMADEUS
Yes. (*Pause*) Tell me by the way: do you actually want to assist at that charity concert?

CECILIA
Why not? I couldn't say no to Marie. Have you any objection?

AMADEUS
No — why should I? But we might use the half hour that's left to go over something. (*He goes to the music-stand*) What do you want to sing?

CECILIA
Oh, something of yours, for one thing...

AMADEUS

Oh, no, no.

CECILIA
Why not?

AMADEUS
There's nothing within yourself that prompts you to sing it anyhow.

CECILIA
Just as you say, Amadeus. — I don't want to intrude either.

AMADEUS (*bending forward and searching among the music*) How would Schumann be— "The Snow-drop?" Or... "Old Melodies"... and "Love Betrayed"....

CECILIA
Yes. And perhaps von Wolf's "Concealment," and something by Brahms. "No more to meet you, was my firm decision...."

AMADEUS
Yes, I was just holding it in my hand. (*As if casually, and very dryly*) So you went for a walk with Sigismund after all?

CECILIA
Yes. He sent his regards to you.

AMADEUS (*smiling*)
Did he? (*As he brings the music sheets to the piano*) Why doesn't he come here instead?

CECILIA
One of the things I like about him is that he won't.

AMADEUS
Is that so? — Oh, well! — I'll send him my regards, too. But it's really too bad that he won't come here any more. It was very nice to hear him play his waltzes — those evenings were really very pleasant.... I just happened to mention them to the Countess this afternoon.

CECELIA
Oh, you did? — And I have just seen her picture.

AMADEUS
Her picture?

CECILIA
I went with Sigismund to the Art Gallery.

AMADEUS
Oh. — They tell me it's a great success.

CECILIA
It would be a wonder if it were not. The artist spent six months on it, they say....

AMADEUS
Is that too much for a good picture?

CECELIA
No, but for the Countess. — She will probably sing Philine pretty well, by the way.

AMADEUS
You think so? I fear you are mistaken.... (*Pause*) Well, Cecilia, what were you talking of to-day — you and Sigismund?

CECILIA
What were we talking of...? (*Pause*) It's so hard to recall the words.... (*As she goes slowly to the fireplace*) And they have such a different sound when recalled in that way.

AMADEUS
True indeed. (*Coming nearer to her*) And I don't suppose it's the words that matter.... Well, Cecilia, can it be possible that you have nothing more to tell me?

CECILIA
Nothing *more*...? (*Hesitatingly*) Don't you think, Amadeus, that many things actually change character when you try to put them into words?

AMADEUS
Not for people like us.

CECILIA
That may have been true once. But... you know as well as I do... that things are no longer as they used to be.

AMADEUS
Not quite, perhaps. I know. But this shouldn't be a reason for either one of us to refuse telling the other one. Scruples of that kind would be unworthy of ourselves. This is *we*, Cecilia — you and me! So you may tell me fearlessly what you have to tell.

CECILIA (*rising*)
Don't try to encourage me, Amadeus.

AMADEUS
Well...?

CECILIA (*remains silent*)

AMADEUS
Do you love him?

CECILIA
Do I love him...?

AMADEUS (*urgently*)
Cecilia...!

CECILIA
Am I to tell you *more* than I think is true? Wouldn't that be a lie, too — as good or as bad as any other one?... No, I don't think I love him. It is nothing like it was when I became acquainted with you, Amadeus.

AMADEUS
That time is long past. — And you have probably forgotten what it was like. On the whole, it must be the same thing, I suppose. Only you have grown a little older since then, and you have been living with me for seven years.... No matter how far apart we may have been, you have been living *with me* — and we have a child....

CECILIA
Well, perhaps that's what makes the difference — but there *is* a difference.

AMADEUS
What really matters is nothing new, however. You feel attracted to him, don't you?

CECILIA (*speaking with genuine feeling and almost tenderly*)
But perhaps there is still something that holds back — that could hold me back, if it only wanted.

AMADEUS (*after a pause, brusquely*)
But it doesn't want to... it doesn't dare to want it. What sense could there be in it? Perhaps I might prove the stronger to-day — and the next time, perhaps — but sooner or later the day must come nevertheless, when I should suffer defeat.

CECILIA
Why?... It ought not to be necessary!

AMADEUS
And then, even if I remained victorious every time — could that be called happiness for which I must fight repeatedly and tremble all the time? Could that be called happiness in our case, who have known what is so much better?... No, Cecilia, our love should not be permitted to end in mutual distrust. I don't hold you, Cecilia, if you are attracted elsewhere — and you have known all the time that I would never hold you.

CECILIA
Maybe you are right, Amadeus. But is it pride alone that makes you let me slip away so easily?

AMADEUS
Is it love alone that brings you back when almost gone? (*Pause; he goes to the window*)

CECILIA
Why should we spoil these hours with bitterness, Amadeus? After all, we have nothing to reproach each other

for. We have promised to be honest with each other, and *my* word has been kept so far.

AMADEUS
And so has mine. If you want it, I can tell you exactly what I and the Countess talked of to-day, as I have always done. And for *me*, Cecilia, it will even be possible to recall the very words.

CECILIA (*looking long at him*)

I know enough. (*Pause*)

AMADEUS (*walking to and fro until he stops some distance away from her*) And what next?

CECILIA
What next...? Perhaps it's just as well that our vacations are soon to begin. Then we may consider in peace, each one by himself, what is to come next.

AMADEUS
It seems almost as if both of us should have expected this very thing. We have made no common plans for the summer, although we have always done so before.

CECILIA
The best thing for me is probably to go with the boy to some quiet place in the Tirol... as you and Albert suggested.

AMADEUS
Yes.

CECILIA
And you...?

AMADEUS
I...? I shall make that walking tour with Albert. I want to be scrambling about in the mountains once more.

CECILIA
And finally descend into some beautiful valley — is that what you mean?

AMADEUS
That — might happen.

CECILIA (*dryly*)
But *first* — we should have to bid each other definite good-by, as there is no return from *that* place.

AMADEUS
Of course, there isn't! No more than from your place.

CECILIA
From mine...?

AMADEUS
Oh, it might happen that you felt inclined to... change your plans... and instead of staying with Marie... prefer the undisturbed...

CECILIA
I won't change my plans. And you had better not change yours.

AMADEUS
If that be your wish....

CECILIA
It is my wish. (*Pause*)

AMADEUS
Can it be possible that now, all at once, the moment should have come?

CECILIA
What moment?

AMADEUS
Well — the one we used to foresee in our happiest days even — the one we have expected as something almost inevitable.

CECILIA
Yes, it has come. We know now that everything is over.

AMADEUS
Over...?

CECILIA
That's what we have been talking of all the time, I suppose.

AMADEUS
Yes, you are right. At bottom it is better that we put it into plain words at last. Our moods have been rather too precarious lately.

CECILIA
Everything will be improved now.

AMADEUS
Improved...? Why?... Oh, of course... perhaps you are right. I feel almost as if things had already begun to improve. It's strange, but... one... seems to breathe more freely.

CECILIA
Yes, Amadeus, now we are reaping the reward of always having been honest. Think how exhausted most people would be in a moment like this — by all sorts of painful evasions, labored truces, and pitifully sentimental reconciliations. Think of the hostile spirit in which they would be facing each other during their

moment of belated candor. We two, Amadeus — we shall at least be able to part as friends. (*Pause*)

AMADEUS
And our boy?

CECILIA
Is he your sole worry?

AMADEUS
No, there are many things. How is it going to be arranged anyhow?

CECILIA
That's what we shall have to discuss carefully during the next few days — before we go away. Until then everything must remain as before. It can perfectly well remain as it has been during the last year. That involves no wrong to anybody. (*Pause*)

AMADEUS (*seats himself at the piano; the ensuing pause is laden with apprehension; then he begins to play the same theme — a Capriccio — which was heard earlier during the scene*)

CECILIA (*who has been approaching the door to the veranda, turns about to listen*)

AMADEUS (*stops abruptly*)

CECILIA
Why don't you go on?

AMADEUS (*laughs quickly, nervously*)

CECILIA
Wasn't that the Intermezzo?

AMADEUS (*nods*)

CECILIA (*still at some distance from him*)
Have you made up your mind what you are going to call it? Is it to be *Capriccio*?

AMADEUS
Perhaps *Capriccio doloroso*. It is peculiar how one often fails to understand one's own ideas to begin with. The hidden sadness of that theme has been revealed to me by you.

CECILIA
Oh, you would have discovered it yourself, Amadeus.

AMADEUS
Maybe. (*Pause*) And whom will you get for the studying of your parts next year?

CECILIA
Oh, I'll always find somebody. Those numbers for the concert — you'll help me with those just the same,

won’t you? And I hope you’ll be kind enough to give me the accompaniment at the concert too.

AMADEUS
That’s a foregone conclusion. — But I should really like to know who is to assist you with your studies after this.

CECILIA
Do you regard that as the most important problem to be solved?

AMADEUS
No, of course not. The less so, as I don’t quite see why I shouldn’t go on helping you as before.

CECILIA (*with a smile*)
Oh, you think...? But then we should have to agree on hours and conditions.

AMADEUS
That was not meant as a joke, Cecilia. Seeing that we are parting in a spirit of perfect understanding, why shouldn’t such an arrangement be considered tentatively at least?

CECILIA
Those things will probably settle themselves later on.... That we... that you play my accompaniment at a concert... or help me to study a part....

AMADEUS
Why later on?... (*He rises and stands leaning against the piano*) There can be no reasonable ground for changing our musical relationships. I think both of us would suffer equally from doing so. Without overestimating myself, I don’t think it likely that you can find a better coach than I am. And as for my compositions, I don’t know of anybody who could understand them better — with whom I would rather discuss them than with you.

CECILIA
And yet that’s what you will have to come to.

AMADEUS
I can’t see it. After all, we have nobody else to consider — at least, I have not.

CECILIA
Nor have I. I shall know how to preserve my freedom.

AMADEUS
Well, then...?!

CECILIA
Nevertheless, Amadeus.... That we must meet and talk is made necessary by our positions, of course.... But even in regard to our work things cannot possibly remain as hitherto. I’m sure you must realize that.

AMADEUS

I can't see it. And — leaving our artistic relations entirely aside — there is much else to be considered — things of more importance. Our boy, Cecilia. Why should the youngster all at once be made fatherless, so to speak?

CECILIA
That's entirely out of the question. We must come to an understanding, of course.

AMADEUS
An understanding, you say. But why make difficulties that could be avoided by a little good-will? The boy is mine as much as yours. Why shouldn't we continue to bring him up together?

CECILIA
You suggest things that simply can't be done.

AMADEUS
I don't feel like you about that. — On the contrary! The more I consider our situation calmly, the more irrational it seems to me that we should part ways like any ordinary divorced couple... that we should give up the beautiful home we have in common....

CECILIA
Now you are dreaming again, Amadeus!

AMADEUS
We have been such good chums besides. And so we might remain, I think.

CECILIA
Oh, of course, we shall.

AMADEUS
Well, then! The things that bind us together are so compelling, after all, that any new experiences brought by our freedom must seem absolutely unessential in comparison. Don't you realize that as I do? And *we* shouldn't have to consider what people may say. I think we have the right to place ourselves on a somewhat higher level. In the last instance, we must always belong together, even if a single tie should be severed among the hundreds that unite us. Or are we all of a sudden to forget what we have been to each other — as well as what we may and should be to each other hereafter? One thing remains certain: that no one else will ever understand you as I do, and no one me as you do.... And that's what counts in the end! So why shouldn't we....

CECILIA
No, it's impossible! Not because of the people. They concern me as little as they do you. But for our own sake.

AMADEUS
For our own sake...?

CECILIA

You see, there is one thing you forget: that, beginning with to-day, we shall have *secrets* to keep from each other. Who knows how many — or how heavy they may prove?... But even the least of them must come between us like a veil.

AMADEUS
Secrets...?

CECILIA
Yes, Amadeus.

AMADEUS
No, Cecilia.

CECILIA
What do you mean?

AMADEUS
That's exactly what must not happen.

CECILIA
But — Amadeus!

AMADEUS
There must never be any secrets between us two. Everything depends on that — you are right to that extent. But why should there be any secrets between us? Remember that after to-day we shall no longer be man and wife, but chums — just chums, who can hide nothing from each other — who must not hide anything. Or is that more than you dare?

CECILIA
More than I dare...? Of course not.

AMADEUS
All right. We'll discuss everything frankly, just as we have been doing — nay, we shall have more things than ever to discuss. Truth becomes now the natural basis of our continued relationship — truth without any reservation whatsoever. And that should prove highly profitable, not only to our mutual relationship, but to each one of us individually. Because... you don't think, do you, that either one of us could find a better chum than the other one?... Now we shall bring our joys and sorrows to each other. We shall be as good friends as ever, if not better still. And our hands shall be joined, even if chasms open between us. And thus we shall keep all that we have had in common hitherto: our work, our child, our home — all that we must continue to have in common if it is to retain its full value to both of us. And we shall gain many new things for which both of us have longed — things in which I could take no pleasure, by the way, if I had to lose you.

CECILIA (*drops him a curtsey*)

AMADEUS
That's how you feel, too, Cecilia. I am sure of it. We simply cannot live without each other. I certainly cannot

live without you. — And how about you?

CECILIA
It’s quite likely I should find it a little difficult.

AMADEUS
Then we agree, Cecilia!

CECILIA
You think so...?!

AMADEUS
Cecilia! (*He suddenly draws her closer to himself*)

CECILIA (*with new hope lighting her glance*)
What are you doing?

AMADEUS (*putting his arms about her*)

I now bid good-by to my beloved.

CECILIA
Forever.

AMADEUS
Forever. (*Pressing her hand*) And now I am welcoming my friend.

CECILIA
For all time to come — nothing but your friend.

AMADEUS
For all time...? Of course!

CECILIA (*draws a deep breath*)

AMADEUS
Yes, Cecilia, don’t you feel much easier all at once?

CECILIA
The whole thing seems very strange to me — like a dream almost.

AMADEUS
There is nothing strange about it. Nothing could possibly be simpler or more sensible. Life goes right on... and all is well.... Come on, Cecilia — let us run through those songs.

CECILIA
What songs...?

AMADEUS
Don’t you care?

CECILIA
Oh, why not? — With pleasure....

AMADEUS (*seating himself at the piano*)
Really, I can’t tell you how happy this makes me! There has practically been no change whatever. The uneasiness alone is gone... that uneasiness of the last few weeks.... I have not had a very happy time lately. The sky has seemed so black above our house — and not only above *ours*. Now the clouds are vanishing. The whole world has actually grown light again. And I am going to write a symphony — oh, a symphony...!

CECILIA
Everything in due time.... Just now let us have one of those songs at least.... Oh, that one...?

AMADEUS
Don’t you want it?

CECILIA
Oh, as it’s there already....

AMADEUS
Now, then — I start. (*He strikes the first chord*) Please don’t put a lot of sentimentality into the opening words. They should be reserved and ponderous.

CECILIA (*singing*)
“No more to meet you was my firm....”

AMADEUS
Very fine.

CECILIA
O Amadeus!

AMADEUS
What is it?

CECILIA
I am afraid you will become too lenient now.

AMADEUS
Lenient...? You know perfectly well that, as artist considered, you have no rival in my eyes, and will never have one.

CECILIA
Really, Amadeus, you shouldn’t be flirting with all your pupils.

AMADEUS
I have the greatest respect for you. — Now let's go in!

CECILIA
"No more to meet...."

AMADEUS
What's the matter?

CECILIA
Nothing. I haven't tried to sing anything like this for a long time. Go right on!

AMADEUS (*begins playing again*)

CECILIA
"No more to meet you was my firm and sworn decision, and yet when evening comes, I...."

CURTAIN

THE SECOND ACT



THE SAME ROOM as in the previous act. It is an evening in October. The stage is dark. Marie and the chambermaid enter together. The maid turns on the light.

MARIE
Thank you. — But if your mistress is tired, please tell her she mustn't let me disturb her.

CHAMBERMAID
She hasn't arrived yet. She's not expected until this evening.

AMADEUS (*enters from the right, with hat and overcoat on*) Who is it?... Oh, is it you, Marie! Glad to see you. Have you been here long?

MARIE
No, I just got here. I meant to call on Cecilia, but I hear....

AMADEUS
Then you can keep me company waiting for her. (*Handing overcoat and hat to the maid*) Please take these.

CHAMBERMAID (*goes out*)

AMADEUS
I have also just got home. I had to do a lot of errands. I start the day after to-morrow.

MARIE
So soon! — That'll be a short reunion.

AMADEUS
Yes. — Won't you sit down, please? (*Looking at his watch*) Cecilia should be here in an hour.

MARIE
She has had a tremendous success again.

AMADEUS
I should say so! Look here — the telegram I got this morning. (*He takes it from the writing desk and hands it to Marie*) It refers to her final appearance last night.

MARIE
Oh.... Twenty-seven curtain calls...!

AMADEUS
What?... Naw! That flourish belongs to the preceding word. Seven only! Otherwise she wouldn't be coming to-day.

MARIE (*reading again*)
“Have new offer on brilliant terms.”

AMADEUS
On *brilliant* terms!

MARIE
Then I suppose she’ll do it at last?

AMADEUS
Do what?

MARIE
Settle down in Berlin for good.

AMADEUS
Oh, it isn’t certain. “Have offer,” she says, and not “have accepted offer.” No, we’ll have to talk it over first.

MARIE
Really?

AMADEUS
Of course. We consult each other about everything, my dear Marie — just as we used to do. And in a much more impersonal spirit than before. As far as I am concerned, I shall be quite free next year, and have no more reason to live in Vienna than in Berlin or in America.

MARIE
But it will be dreadful for me if Cecilia goes away.

AMADEUS
Well, these successes abroad may possibly force the people here to understand what they have in Cecilia, and to act accordingly.

MARIE
I hope so. — Besides, I think really that Cecilia has developed a great deal lately. To me her voice seems fuller and richer — with more soul to it, I might say.

AMADEUS
Yes, don’t you think so? That’s my feeling, too.

MARIE
But how she *does* work! It had never occurred to me that a finished artist might be so industrious.

AMADEUS
Might, you say? Must, you should say.

MARIE

Last summer, when I came out mornings in the garden to play with my children, she would be practicing already — just like a young student. With absolute regularity, from nine until a quarter of ten. Then again before lunch, from twelve to half past. And finally another half hour in the evening.... If the weather was good or bad; if she was in good spirits or....

AMADEUS
Or...?

MARIE
She was always in good spirits for that matter. I don't think anything in the world could have kept her from practicing those runs and trills.

AMADEUS
Yes, that's her way. Nothing in the world could keep her from.... But then, what could there be to keep her from it last Summer? In that rustic retreat of yours, where you didn't see anybody... or hardly anybody....

MARIE
Nobody at all.

AMADEUS
Well, you received a call now and then — or Cecilia did, at least.

MARIE
Oh, I see. You mean — Prince Sigismund. He could hardly be said to call.

AMADEUS (*smilingly, with an appearance of unconcern*)
Why not?

MARIE
He merely whisked by on his wheel.

AMADEUS (*as before*)
Oh, he must at least have stopped to lean against a tree for a few moments. He must even have taken time enough — and I am mighty glad he did — to photograph the little house in which you were living. (*He takes from the desk a small framed photograph and hands it to Marie, who is seated on the couch*)

MARIE (*surprised*)
And you have that standing on your writing desk?

AMADEUS (*slightly puzzled*)
Why shouldn't I?

MARIE (*studying the photograph*)
Just as it was — Cecilia and I sitting on the bench there — yes. And there's the hazel by the garden fence.... How it does bring back the memory of that beautiful, warm Summer day...

AMADEUS (*bending over the desk to look at the picture*)

I can make out you and Cecilia, but those three boys puzzle me hopelessly.

MARIE
In what way...? That's little Peter, who is doing like this... (*She blinks*)

AMADEUS
Oh, is that it?

MARIE
And that's Max — and he with the hoop is Mauritz.

AMADEUS
So that's a hoop?... I took it for one of those cabins used by the watchmen along the railroad. The background comes out much better. The landscape actually looks as if steeped in Summer and stillness.... (*Brief pause*)

MARIE
It was really nice. The deep shadows of the woods right back of the house, and that view of the mountain peaks — oh, marvelous! And then the seclusion.... It's too bad that you never had a look at that darling place. We thought... Cecilia did expect you after all....

AMADEUS (*has risen and is walking to and fro*)

I don't believe it.... And it didn't prove feasible, for that matter. The pull of the South was still on me.

MARIE (*smiling*)
You call that the South?

AMADEUS (*smiling also*)
Oh, Marie!

MARIE (*a little embarrassed*)

I hope you're not offended?

AMADEUS
Why should I be? I didn't make a secret of my whereabouts to anybody.

MARIE (*confidentially*)
Albert told me about the villa, and the park, and the marble steps....

AMADEUS
So he gave you all those details? And yet he wasn't there more than an hour.

MARIE
I think he intends to use the park for his last act.

AMADEUS
Is that so? If he would only bring it to me... I mean the last act. I want to take it with me on my tour.

MARIE
Do you think you'll find time to work?

AMADEUS
Why not? I am always working. And I have never in my life been more eager about it. I, too, am having a brilliant period. For years I have not been doing better. And I am no less industrious than Cecilia. With the difference that regular hours are not in my line — nine to nine-forty-five, twelve to twelve-thirty, and so on. But you ask Albert! When he threw himself on the bed exhausted, in that inn at the Fedaja Pass, I sat down and finished the instrumentation for the *Capriccio* in my Fourth.

CHAMBERMAID (*enters with a couple of letters and goes out again*)

AMADEUS
You'll pardon me, my dear Marie?

MARIE
Please don't mind me. (*She rises*)

AMADEUS
A letter from Cecilia, written yesterday, before the performance. I have had letters like this every day.

MARIE
Go right on and read it, please.

AMADEUS (*having opened the letter*)
Oh, there's plenty of time. In another hour Cecilia will be telling me all that's in it.... (*He opens the other letter, runs through it, and flings it away*) How stupid people are... *how* stupid!... Ugh! And mean! (*He glances through Cecilia's letter once more*) Cecilia writes me about a reception at the house of the Director.... Sigismund was there, too. Yes, you know, of course, that Sigismund has been in Berlin?

MARIE (*embarrassed*)

I... I thought... Or rather, I knew...

AMADEUS (*with an air of superiority*)
Well, well — there is no cause for embarrassment in that. Don't you consider the Prince an uncommonly sympathetic person?

MARIE
Yes, he's very pleasant. But I can assure you, Amadeus, that he came only once to our place in the Pustertal, and he didn't stay more than two hours.

AMADEUS (*laughing*)
And what if he had stayed a week...? Really, Marie, you're very funny!

MARIE (*shyly*)
May I tell you something?

AMADEUS
Anything you want, Marie.

MARIE
I'm convinced that you two will find each other again in spite of all.

AMADEUS
Find each other...? Who should? Cecilia and I? (*He rises*) Find each other? (*He walks to and fro, but stops finally near Marie*) A sensible woman like you, Marie — you ought to understand that Cecilia and I have never lost each other in any way. I think it's very singular.... (*He strolls back and forth again*) Oh, you must understand that the relationship between her and me is so beautiful — that now only it has become such that we couldn't imagine anything more satisfactory. We don't have to find each other again! Look here now — here are her letters. She has been writing me from eight to twelve pages every day — frank, exhaustive letters, as you can only write them to a friend — or rather, only to your very best friend. It is simply impossible to imagine a finer relationship.

ALBERT (*entering from the right*)
Good evening.

AMADEUS
You're rather late in getting here.

ALBERT
Good evening, Marie. (*He pats her patronizingly on the cheek*)

AMADEUS
There will hardly be time for work now. Cecilia will be here very soon.

ALBERT
Oh, we can always put in half an hour. I have brought along some notes for the third act.

MARIE
I think I shall go home, as the boys will be expecting me soon.

ALBERT
All right, child, you go on home.

AMADEUS
Why don't you stay instead? I am sure Cecilia will be glad to see you. And then Albert can take you home. You might get Peter to entertain you in the meantime.... Or would you prefer to stay here and listen?

ALBERT
No, child, you had better go in to Peter. Especially as Mr. von Rabagas doesn't appear in the third act — so you won't be losing much.

MARIE
I'll leave you alone. Bye-bye! (*She goes out*)

ALBERT
Now let's fall to! (*He brings out some notes from one of his pockets and begins to read*) "The stage shows an open stretch of rolling ground that slopes gradually toward the footlights. In the background stands a villa, with marble steps leading up to it. Still farther back, the sea can be felt rather than seen." (*Bowing to Amadeus*) "A tall plane tree in full leaf stands in the center of the stage."

AMADEUS (*laughing*)
So you have got it there?

ALBERT
It's meant as a compliment to you.

AMADEUS
Many thanks.

ALBERT (*after a pause*)
Tell me, Amadeus, is it actually true that the Count has become reconciled with the Countess after his duel with the painter?

AMADEUS
I don't know. For a good long while I haven't seen the Countess except at the opera. (*He rises and begins walking to and fro again*)

ALBERT (*shaking his head*)
There's something uncanny about that affair.

AMADEUS
Why? I think it's quite commonplace. A husband who has discovered his wife's (*sarcastically*) "disloyalty"....

ALBERT
That wasn't the point. But that he discovers it only six months too late, when his wife is already deceiving him with another man. — There would have been nothing peculiar about the Count having a fight with you. But the case is much more complicated. Here we have a young man all but killed because of an affair that is long past. And in the meantime you are left perfectly unmolested — or have been so far, at least.

AMADEUS (*walking as before*)

ALBERT
Do you know, what I almost regret — looking at it from a higher viewpoint? That the painter is not a man of genius... and that the Count hasn't *really* killed him. That would have put something tremendously tragi-comical into the situation. And that's what would have happened, if... *he up there* had a little more wit....

AMADEUS
How? What do you mean by that?

ALBERT

I mean, if I had been writing the play....

AMADEUS (*makes a movement as if hearing some noise outside*)

ALBERT
What is it?

AMADEUS
I thought I heard a carriage, but it was nothing. (*He looks at his watch*) And it wouldn't be possible yet.... You read on, please. (*Once more he begins walking back and forth*)

ALBERT
You're very preoccupied. I'll rather come back to-morrow morning.

AMADEUS
No, go on. I am not at all....

ALBERT (*rising*)
Let me tell you something, Amadeus. If it would please you — and it would be all one to me, you know — I could go with you.

AMADEUS
Where?... What do you mean?

ALBERT
On your tour. For a week, at least, or a fortnight, I should be very glad to stay by you... (*affectionately*) until you have got over the worst.

AMADEUS
But...! Good gracious, do you think it's because of the Countess...? Why, that story is over long ago.

ALBERT
Which I know. And I know, too, that you are now trying other means of making yourself insensible. But I see perfectly well that, under the circumstances, you can't succeed all at once.

AMADEUS
What circumstances are you talking of anyhow?

ALBERT
My dear fellow, I should never have dreamt of forcing myself into your confidence, but as the matter has already got into the papers....

AMADEUS
What has got into the papers?

ALBERT
Haven't you read that thing in the New Journal to-night?

AMADEUS
What thing?

ALBERT
That Cecilia and Prince Sigismund.... But, of course, you are familiar with the main facts?

AMADEUS
I'm familiar with nothing. What is in the New Journal?

ALBERT
Just a brief notice — without any names, but not to be mistaken.... It reads something like this: "One of our foremost artists, who has just been celebrating triumphs in the metropolis of an adjoining state... until now the wife of a gifted musician"... or perhaps it was "highly gifted"... and so on... and so on... "and a well-known Austrian gentleman, belonging to our oldest nobility, intend, we are told..." and so on....

AMADEUS
Cecilia and the Prince...?!

ALBERT
Yes... and then a hint that, in such a case, it would not prove very difficult to obtain a dispensation from the Pope....

AMADEUS
Has everybody gone crazy?... I can assure you that not a word of it is true!... You won't believe me?... I hope you don't think I would deny it, if.... Or do you actually mean that Cecilia might have... from me.... Oh, dear, and you are supposed to be a friend of ours, a student of the human soul, and a poet!

ALBERT
I beg your pardon, but after what has happened it would not seem improbable....

AMADEUS
Not improbable...? It is simply impossible! Cecilia has never thought of it!

ALBERT
However, it ought not to surprise you that such a rumor has been started.

AMADEUS
Nothing surprises me. But I feel as if the relationship between Cecilia and myself were being profaned by tittle-tattle of that kind.

ALBERT
Pioneers like yourself must scorn the judgment of the world. Else they are in danger of being proved mere braggarts.

AMADEUS
Oh, I am no pioneer. The whole thing is a private arrangement between me and Cecilia, which gives us both the greatest possible comfort. Be kind enough, at least, to tell the people who ask you, that we are not going

to be divorced — but that, on the other hand, we are not deceiving each other, as it is asserted in these scrawls with which I have been bombarded for some time. (*He indicates the letter which arrived at the same time as Cecilia's*)

ALBERT (*picks up the letter, glances through it, and puts it away again*) An anonymous letter...? Well, that's part of it....

AMADEUS
Explain to them, please, that there can be no talk of deceit where no lies have been told. Tell them that Cecilia's and my way of keeping faith with each other is probably a much better one than that practiced in so many other marriages, where both go their own ways all day long and have nothing in common but the night. You are a poet, are you not — and a student of the human soul? Well, why don't you make all this clear to the people who refuse to understand?

ALBERT
To convey all that would prove a rather complicated process. But if it means so much to you, I could make a play out of it. Then they would have no trouble in comprehending this new kind of marriage — at least between the hours of eight-thirty and ten.

AMADEUS
Are you so sure of that?

ALBERT
Absolutely. In a play I can make the case much clearer than it is presented by reality — without any of those superfluous, incidental side issues, which are so confusing in life. The main advantage is, however, that no spectators attend the entr'acts, so that I can do just what I please with you during those periods. And besides, I shall make you offer an analogy illuminating the whole case.

AMADEUS
An analogy, you say...?

ALBERT
Yes, analogies always have a very soothing effect. You will remark to a friend — or whoever may prove handy — something like this: "What do you want me to do anyhow? Suppose that Cecilia and I were living in a nice house, where we felt perfectly comfortable, and which had a splendid view that pleased us very much, and a wonderful garden where we liked to take walks together. And suppose that one of us should feel a desire sometime to pick strawberries in the woods beyond the fence. Should that be a reason for the other one to raise a cry all at once about faithlessness, or disgrace, or betrayal? Should that force us to sell the house and garden, or make us imagine that we could never more look out of the window together, or walk under our splendid trees? Merely because our strawberries happened to be growing on the other side of the fence..."

AMADEUS
And you would make me say that?

ALBERT
Do you fear it's too brilliant for you? — Oh, that wouldn't occur to anybody. Trust me to fix it. In such a play

I can do nothing whatever with your musical talent. You see, I can't let you conduct your symphony for the benefit of the public. And so I get both myself and you out of it by putting into your character a little more sense and energy and consistency....

AMADEUS
Than God has given me originally.

ALBERT
Well, it's not very hard to compete with Him!

AMADEUS
I shall certainly be curious about one thing: how you mean to end that play.

ALBERT (*after a brief pause*)
Not very happily, my dear fellow.

AMADEUS (*a little staggered*)
Why?

ALBERT
It is characteristic of all transitional periods, that a conflict which might not exist to a later generation, must end tragically the moment a fairly decent person becomes involved in it.

AMADEUS
But there is no conflict.

ALBERT
I shall not shirk the duty of inventing one.

AMADEUS
Suppose you wait a little while yet...? Perhaps life itself might....

ALBERT
My dear chap, I am not at all interested in what may be done with us by this ridiculous reality which has to get along without stage manager or prompter — this reality which frequently never gets to the fifth act, merely because the hero happens to be struck on the head by a brick in the second. I make the curtain rise when the plot takes a diverting turn, and I drop it the moment I have proved myself in the right.

AMADEUS
Please, my dear fellow, don't forget when writing your play, to introduce a figure on which reality in this case has lavished much more care than on the hero — I mean, the fool.

ALBERT
You can't insult me in that way. I have always regarded myself as closely akin to him.
[*Marie enters with little Peter and the Governess.*

PETER

Mamma is coming!

MARIE
The carriage has just stopped outside.

GOVERNESS
It was impossible to make the boy stay in bed.

ALBERT
And look at the fine flowers he has got!

PETER
That's for mamma!

AMADEUS (*takes a flower out of the bunch*)

I hope you permit, sonny...

CECILIA (*enters followed by the Chambermaid*)
Good evening! — Oh, are you here, too? That's awfully nice!

PETER
Mamma! — Flowers!

CECILIA (*picks him up and kisses him*)
My boy! My boy! (*Then she shakes hands with the rest*)

AMADEUS (*handing her the single flower*)
Peter let me have one, too.

CECILIA
Thanks. (*She shakes hands with him; then to the chambermaid*) Get my things out of the carriage, please. The coachman will help you. He has been paid already.

CHAMBERMAID (*goes out*)

CECILIA (*taking off her hat*)
Well, Marie?... (*To the other two*) Can it be possible that you have been working?

ALBERT
We have tried.

CECILIA (*to the governess*)
Has he behaved like a little man?

PETER
Indeed I have! Have you brought anything for me?

CECILIA
Of course. But you won't get it until to-morrow morning.

PETER
Why not?

CECILIA
Because I am too tired to unpack. To-morrow, when you wake up, you'll find it on your little table.

PETER
What is it?

CECILIA
You'll see by and by....

PETER
Is my little table big enough for it?

CECILIA
We'll hope so.

AMADEUS (*who is leaning against the piano, keeps looking at her all the time*)

CECILIA (*pretends not to notice him*)

ALBERT
You're looking splendid.

CECILIA
I'm a little bit worn out.

AMADEUS
You must be hungry.

CECILIA
Not at all. We had something to eat in the dining car. Almost everybody did. But I do want a cup of tea. (*To the governess*) Will you see to it, please?

AMADEUS
Let me have a cup, too, and please see that I get a few slices of cold meat.

GOVERNESS
I have given orders for it already. (*She goes out*)

CECILIA
Have you really been waiting for me with the supper?

AMADEUS

No... I haven't been waiting. I... simply never thought of it.

CECILIA (*to Albert and Marie*)
Why don't you sit down?

ALBERT
No, we are going, my dear Cecilia. Let me congratulate you with all my heart — that will be enough for to-day.

MARIE
You have celebrated regular triumphs, they say?

CECILIA
Well, it wasn't bad. (*To Amadeus*) Did you get my telegram?

AMADEUS
Yes, it pleased me tremendously.

CECILIA
Think of it, children! After the performance I was commanded to appear in the box of His Majesty!

ALBERT
Commanded...? Invited, I hope you mean! Neither emperor nor king has the right to command you.

CECILIA
You old anarchist! But what does it matter? One goes to the box nevertheless. And you would have done that, too.

ALBERT
Why not? One must, if possible, study every form of existence at close quarters.

AMADEUS
And what did the Emperor have to say?

CECILIA
He was very complimentary. Had never seen a better Carmen.

ALBERT
The very next thing he'll order an opera for you from some Spaniard.

GOVERNESS (*enters*)
The tea will be here in a moment.

AMADEUS
Now you must get back to bed, Peter. It's late.

GOVERNESS (*wants to take the boy away*)

PETER
No, mamma must take me to bed as when I was a little baby.

CECILIA
Come on then! — Mercy me, how heavy you have grown. (*Goes out with Peter and the governess*)

MARIE
My, but she is pretty!

AMADEUS
Haven't you discovered that before?

ALBERT
Well, good-by then!

AMADEUS
Until to-morrow. I shall be expecting you early — between nine and ten.

MARIE (*to Amadeus as she is going out*)
Don't you regret having to leave her again at once?

AMADEUS
Duty, my dear Marie....

CECILIA (*returning*)
Oh, are you really going? — Good-by then — for a little while!
[*Albert and Marie go out.*

CECILIA (*going to the fireplace*)
Home again! (*She sits down*)

AMADEUS (*near the door and speaking rather shyly*)
It's a question whether it can please you as much as it does me.

CECILIA (*holds out her hand to him*)

AMADEUS (*takes her hand and kisses it; then he seats himself*) Tell me all about it.

CECILIA
What am I to tell? I haven't left anything untold — or hardly anything.

AMADEUS
Well....

CECILIA
Getting home every night — and it was quite late at times, as you know — I sat down and wrote to you. I wish you had been equally explicit.

AMADEUS
But I have written you every day, too.

CECILIA
Nevertheless, my dear, it seems to me you must have lots to add. (*With a laugh*) To many things you have referred in a strikingly casual fashion.

AMADEUS
I might say the same to you.

CECILIA
No, you can't. My letters have practically been diaries. And that's more than could be said of yours. — Well, Amadeus...? Without frankness the whole situation becomes meaningless, I should say.

AMADEUS
What is there to be cleared up?

CECILIA
Is it really all over with Philine?

AMADEUS
That was all over — (*rising*) before you left. And you know it. I really don't think it's necessary to discuss bygone matters.

CECILIA
Will she be able to stay in the company, by the way — after this scandal in connection with your — pardon me! — predecessor?

AMADEUS
Everything has been arranged, I hear. And she has even made up with her husband again.

CECILIA
Is that so? — That's rather unpleasant, don't you think? At bottom, it matters very little then to have the story all over. In the case of a man who has the disconcerting habit of not finding out certain things until months afterward....

AMADEUS
It is better not to think of such things.

CECILIA
Has she any letters of yours?

AMADEUS (*having thought for a moment*)
Only the one in which I bade her farewell.

CECILIA
That might be enough. Why haven't you demanded it back?

AMADEUS
How could I?

CECILIA
How frivolous you are! Yes, frivolous is just the word. (*Putting her hand on his shoulder*) Now it's possible to talk of a thing like this, Amadeus. Formerly you might have misunderstood such a remark — taking it for jealousy, or something like that.... But, really, I do hope you don't get mixed up in any more affairs of that kind. I don't like to be scared to death all the time on behalf of my best friend. There is nothing in the world I begrudge you — of that you may be sure. But getting killed for the sake of somebody else — that's carrying the joke a little too far!

AMADEUS
I promise you, that you'll no longer have to be scared to death on my behalf.

CECILIA
I hope so. Otherwise I must leave you to take care of yourself. — And seriously speaking, Amadeus, I hope you don't forget that your life has been preserved for more sensible and more important things — that you have a lot more to do in this world.

AMADEUS
Yes, that's what I feel. I don't think I have ever felt it so strongly in all my life. (*Radiantly*) My symphony...

CECILIA (*eagerly*)
... is done?

AMADEUS
It is, Cecilia. And... I didn't mean to tell you about it to-day, but it leaves me no peace....

CECILIA
Well, what is it?

AMADEUS
The chorus in the final passage — you know the principal theme of it already — it is led and dominated by a soprano solo. And that solo has been written for you.

CECILIA
My revered Master! How proud your trust in me makes me!

AMADEUS
Don't make fun of it, Cecilia, I beg you. There is nobody in the world who can sing that solo like you.... That solo is yours — and only yours. While writing it, the ring of your voice was in my mind. Next February, as soon as I get back, I shall have the symphony put on, and then you must sing that solo.

CECILIA
Next Feb...? With pleasure, my dear Amadeus — provided I am still here.

AMADEUS

Why?

CECILIA
Oh, you haven't heard everything yet. After the performance last night the Director had a talk with me.

AMADEUS (*disturbed*)
Well?! — There was a hint in the telegram about brilliant conditions.... But, of course, they could only refer to the next season?

CECILIA
If I can break away from here, they want me in Berlin from the beginning of the year.

AMADEUS
But you can't break away!

CECILIA
Oh, if I really want to. The Director does not care to enforce the contract.

AMADEUS
But you don't want to, Cecilia!

CECILIA
That's a matter for careful consideration. I shall be doing a great deal better there.

AMADEUS
Beginning next Fall, I shall — probably be free. You might wait that long, I should think. Then we could make the move together. But....

CECILIA
It doesn't have to be settled to-day, Amadeus. To-morrow we shall have time to discuss the whole matter thoroughly. Really, I am not in a condition to do so to-night.

AMADEUS
You are tired...?

CECILIA
Of course, you must understand that. In fact, I should very much prefer.... (*She looks in direction of the door leading to her own room*)

CHAMBERMAID (*brings in the tea tray and puts it on a small table*)

CECILIA
Oh, that's right! — May I pour you a cup, too?

AMADEUS
If you please.

CECILIA (*pours the tea; to the chambermaid*)

Open one of the windows a little, will you. There's such a lot of cigarette smoke in here.

CHAMBERMAID (*opens the window at the right*)

AMADEUS
Won't it be too cold for you?

CECILIA
Cold? It has turned very warm again.

AMADEUS
And how did last night's performance go otherwise?

CECILIA
Very well. Wedius in particular proved himself inimitable again.

AMADEUS
You have mentioned him several times in your letters.

CECILIA
You know him since your Dresden period, don't you?

AMADEUS
Yes. He has great gifts.

CECILIA
He thinks a great deal of you, too.

AMADEUS
I'm pleased to hear it.

CHAMBERMAID (*goes out*)

AMADEUS (*helping himself to the cold meat*)
Can I help you to some?

CECILIA
No, thanks. I have had all I want.

AMADEUS
Yes, you have had your supper already — all of you, or "everybody," as you put it a while ago.

CECILIA (*ingenuously*)

I had my supper with Sigismund.

AMADEUS
Was he in Berlin all the time?

CECILIA
He got there two days after me, as I told you in my letters.

AMADEUS
Of course — you have told me everything. Once he accompanied you to the National Gallery.

CECILIA
He also took me to see the Pergamene marbles.

AMADEUS (*facetiously*)
You're doing a lot for his general education, I must say. — But I should like to know by what fraud Sigismund got himself into that reception of the Director's.

CECILIA
By what fraud?

AMADEUS
Well, you wrote me that he created a regular sensation with those waltzes of his.

CECILIA
So he did. But he didn't have to use fraud to get in. Being a nephew of the Baroness, there was no reason why he should resort to such methods.

AMADEUS
Oh, yes, I didn't remember that.

CECILIA
And by the way, the Director asked very eagerly about you.

AMADEUS
He thinks a great deal of me....

CECILIA (*with a smile*)
Yes, he really does. The moment your new opera is ready....

AMADEUS
And so on! (*He goes on eating*) It surprises me, however, that he should ask you about me.

CECILIA
Why does that surprise you?

AMADEUS (*as if meaning no offense*)
Well, it rather surprises me that he should connect our respective personalities to that extent. Hasn't Berlin heard yet that we are going to be divorced?

CECILIA
Why... what does that mean?

AMADEUS (*laughing*)
Rumors to that effect are afloat.

CECILIA
What? Well, I declare!

AMADEUS
Yes, it's incredible what the popular gossip can invent. It's even in the newspapers. His Highness the Prince Sigismund Maradas-Lohsenstein is going to lead you to the altar. The necessary dispensation will be furnished by the Pope. Idiotic — isn't it?

CECILIA
Yes. — But, my dear, you say nothing about what is still more idiotic.

AMADEUS
And what can that be?

CECILIA
That you are on the verge of believing this piece of idiocy.

AMADEUS
I...? How can you.... Oh, no!

CECILIA
You haven't considered, for instance, that I am three years older than he.

AMADEUS (*startled*)
Well, if it's nothing but those three years of difference in....

CECILIA
No, it isn't that. No, indeed! Even if I were younger than he, I should never think of it.

AMADEUS
But if his devotion should prove more deeply rooted than you have supposed so far?

CECILIA
Not even then.

AMADEUS
Why?

CECILIA
Why...? I know that it couldn't last forever anyhow.

AMADEUS
Have you the end in mind already?

CECILIA

I am not saying that I have it in mind.... But I don't doubt it must come, as it always comes.

AMADEUS
And then...?

CECILIA (*shrugs her shoulders*)

AMADEUS
And then?

CECILIA
How could I know, Amadeus? There are prospects of so many kinds.

AMADEUS (*cowering a moment before those words*)
Yes, that's true. Life is full of prospects. Everywhere, wherever you turn, there are temptations and promises — when you have determined to be free, and to take life lightly, as we have done.... That's what you meant, was it not?

CECILIA
Yes, precisely.

AMADEUS
Tell me, Cecilia.... (*He draws closer to her*) There is one thing I should like to know — whether Sigismund has any idea that your mind is harboring such thoughts — which, after all, would appear rather weird to the other party concerned.

CECILIA
Sigismund...? How can you imagine?! Such things you admit only to your friends. (*She gives her hand to him*)

AMADEUS (*in the same friendly manner*)
But if he should notice anything... although I think it very improbable that he is the kind of man who would.... But let us suppose that he concluded from various signs that some such thoughts were passing through your head — would you deny them, if he asked you?

CECILIA
I believe myself capable of it.

AMADEUS (*with a shrinking*)
Oh.... Let me tell you, Cecilia.... You are having something definite in mind.... Yes, I am sure of it.... It's a question of some definite prospect.

CECILIA (*smiling*)
That might be possible.

AMADEUS
What has happened, Cecilia?

CECILIA
Nothing.

AMADEUS
Then there is danger in the air.

CECILIA
Danger...? What could that mean to us? To him who has no obligations there can be no cause for fear.

AMADEUS (*taking her lightly by the arm*)
Stop playing with words! I can see through the whole thing just the same. — I know! It has been brought home to me by a number of passages in your letters — although they ceased long ago to have the frankness due to our friendship. That new prospect is Wedius!

CECILIA
In what respect did my letters fail to be frank? Didn't I write you immediately after the "Onyegin" performance, that there was something fascinating about his personality?

AMADEUS
So you have said before, of many people. But there was never any such prospect implied in it.

CECILIA
Everything begins to take on new meanings when you are free.

AMADEUS
You are not telling me everything.... What has happened?

CECILIA
Nothing has happened, but (*with sudden decision*) if I had stayed... who knows....

AMADEUS (*seems to shrink back again; then he walks to and fro; finally he remains standing in the background, near one of the windows*) Poor Sigismund!

CECILIA
Why pity him? He knows nothing about it.

AMADEUS (*resuming his superior tone*)
Is that what draws you to Berlin?

CECILIA
No!... Indeed, no! The spell has been broken... it seems....

AMADEUS
And yet you talk of going about New Year....

CECILIA (*rising*)
My dear Amadeus, I am really too tired to discuss that matter to-day. Now I shall say good-night to you. It is

quite late. (*She holds out her hand to him*)

AMADEUS (*faltering*)
Good-night, Cecilia!... (*He clings to her hand*) You have been gone three weeks. I shall leave early the day after to-morrow — and when *I* return, you will be gone, I suppose.... There can't be so very much to your friendship, if you won't stay and talk a while with me under such circumstances.

CECILIA
What's the use of being sentimental? Leave-takings are familiar things to us.

AMADEUS
That's true. But nevertheless this will be a new kind of leave-taking, and a new kind of home-coming also.

CECILIA
Well, seeing that it had to turn out this way....

AMADEUS
But neither of us ever imagined that it would turn out this way.

CECILIA
Oh?

AMADEUS
No, Cecilia, we did *not* imagine it. The remarkable thing has been that we retained our faith in each other in the midst of all doubts, and that, even when away from each other, we used to feel calm and confident far beyond what was safe, I suppose. But it was splendid. Separation itself used to have a sort of charm of its own — *formerly*.

CECILIA
Naturally. It isn't possible to love in that undisturbed fashion except when you are miles apart.

AMADEUS
You may be able to make fun of it to-day, Cecilia, but there will never again be anything like it — neither for you nor for me. You can be sure of that.

CECILIA
I know that as well as you do. — But why should you all at once begin to talk as if, somehow, everything would be over between us two, and as if the best part of our life had been irretrievably lost? That's not the case, after all. It cannot possibly be the case. Both of us know that we remain the same as before — don't we — and that everything else that has happened to us, or may happen to us, can be of no particular importance.... And even if it should become important, we shall always be able to join hands, no matter what chasms open between us.

AMADEUS
You speak very sensibly, as usual.

CECILIA

If you seduce ladies by the dozen, and if gentlemen shoot each other dead for my sake — as they do for the sake of Countess Philine — what has that to do with our friendship?

AMADEUS
That's beyond contradiction. Nevertheless, I hadn't expected — in fact, I think it nothing less than admirable — your ability to adjust yourself to everything — your way of remaining perfectly calm in the midst of any new experiences or expectations.

CECILIA
Calm...? Here I am... by our fireplace... taking tea in your company. Here I can and shall always be calm. That's the significance of our whole life in common. Whatever may be my destiny in the world at large will slip off me when I enter here. All the storms are on the outside.

AMADEUS
That's more than you can be sure of, Cecilia. Things might happen that would weigh more heavily on you than you can imagine at this moment.

CECILIA
I shall always have the strength to throw off things according to my will before I come to you. And if that strength should ever fail me, I shall come to the door and no farther.

AMADEUS
Oh, no, you mustn't! That would not be in keeping with our agreement. It is just when life grows heavy that I'll be here to help you bear it.

CECILIA
Who knows whether you will always be ready to do so?

AMADEUS
Always — on my oath! No matter what befall you, whether it be sad or wretched, you can always find refuge and sympathy with me. But with all my heart I wish you may be spared most of those things.

CECILIA
That I be spared...? No, Amadeus, a wish like that I can't accept. Hitherto — I have lived so little hitherto. And I am longing for it. I long for all that's sad and sweet in life, for all that's beautiful and all that's pitiful. I long for storms, for perils — for worse than that, perhaps.

AMADEUS
No, Cecilia, that's nothing but imagination!

CECILIA
Oh, no!

AMADEUS
Certainly, Cecilia. You don't know very much as yet, and you imagine many things simpler and cleaner than they are. But there are things you couldn't stand, and others of which you are not capable. — I know you,

Cecilia.

CECILIA
You know me? — You know only what I have been to you — what I have been as your beloved and your wife. And as you used to mean the whole world to me — as all my longing, all my tenderness, was bounded by you — we could never guess in those days what might prove my destiny when the real world was thrown open to me. — Even to-day, Amadeus, I am no longer the same as before.... Or perhaps I have always been the same as I am now, but didn't know it merely. And something has fallen away, that used to cover me up in the past.... Yes, that's it: for now I can feel all those desires that used to pass me by as if deflected by a cuirass of insensibility.... Now I can feel how they touch my body and my soul, filling me with qualms and passions. The earth seems full of adventure. The sky seems radiant with flames. And it is as if I could see myself stand waiting with wide-open arms.

AMADEUS (*as if calling to somebody in flight*)
Cecilia!

CECILIA
What is the matter?

AMADEUS
Nothing.... The words you speak cannot estrange me after all that I have learned already. But there is a new ring in your voice that I have never heard until to-day. Nor have I ever seen that light in your eyes until to-day.

CECILIA
That's what you imagine, Amadeus. If that were really the case, then I should feel the same in regard to you. But I can see no difference in you at all. And I can't imagine how you possibly could come to seem different. To other women you may appear a mischiefmaker — or a silly youth — which has probably happened many times: but to me you will always remain the same as ever. And I have a feeling that, in the last instance, nothing can ever happen to the Amadeus I am thinking of.

AMADEUS
If I could only feel the same — in regard to you! But such assurance is not mine. The recklessness and greed with which you make your way into an unknown world are filling me with outright fear on your behalf. The idea that there are people who know as little of you as you of them at this moment, and to whom you are going to belong...

CECILIA
I shall belong to nobody... now, that I am free...

AMADEUS
... who are part of your destiny already, as you of theirs... it seems to me uncanny. And you are no more the Cecilia I used to love — no! You resemble closely one who was very dear to me, and yet you are not at all the same as she. No, you are not the woman that was my wife for years. I could feel it the moment you entered the place.... The connection between the young girl who sank into my arms one evening seven years ago and

the woman who has just returned from abroad to dwell for a brief while in this house seems quite mysterious. For seven years I have been living with another woman — with a quiet, kindly woman — with a sort of angel perhaps, who has now disappeared. She who came to-day has a voice that I have never heard, a look that I am foreign to, a beauty that is strange to me — a beauty not surpassing what the other had, except in being more cruel possibly — and yet a beauty that should confer much greater happiness, I think.

CECILIA
Don't look at me like that!... Don't talk to me like that!... That's not the way to talk to a friend! Don't forget I am no more the one I used to be. When you talk to me like that, Amadeus, it is as if here, too, I should be fanned by those cajoling breaths that nowadays so often touch me like caresses — breaths that make life seem incredibly light, and that make you feel ready for so much that formerly would have appeared incomprehensible.

AMADEUS
If you could guess, Cecilia, how your words hurt me and excite me at the same time!

CECILIA (*brusquely*)
You must not talk like that, Amadeus. I don't want it. Be sensible, for my sake as well as your own. Good-night.

AMADEUS
Are you going, Cecilia?

CECILIA
Yes. And bear in mind that we are friends and want to remain such.

AMADEUS
Bear in mind that we have always wanted to be *honest*. And it is not honest — either for you or me — to say that we stand face to face as friends in this moment.... Cecilia — the *one* thing I can feel at this moment is that you are beautiful... beautiful as you have never been before!

CECILIA
Amadeus, Amadeus, are you forgetting all that has happened?

AMADEUS
I could forget it — and so could you.

CECILIA
Oh, I remember — I remember! (*She wants to leave*)

AMADEUS
Stay, Cecilia, stay! The day after to-morrow I shall be gone — stay!

CECILIA
Please don't speak to me like that! I am no longer what I used to be — no longer proud, or calm, or good. Who knows how little might be needed to make me the victim of a certain unscrupulous seducer!

AMADEUS
Cecilia!

CECILIA
Have you so many friends to lose? One is all I have. — Good-night. (*She tries to get away*)

AMADEUS (*seizing her by the hand*)
Cecilia, we have long ago bidden each other good-by as man and wife — but we have also made up our minds to take life lightly, to be free, and to lay hold of every happiness that comes within our reach. Should we be mad enough, or cowardly enough, to shrink from the highest happiness ever offered us...?

CECILIA
And what would it lead to... my friend?

AMADEUS
Don't call me that! I love you and I hate you, but in this moment I am not your friend. What you have been to me — wife, comrade... what do I care! To-day I want to be — your lover!

CECILIA
You mustn't...! You can't... no....

AMADEUS
Not your lover then... but what is both worse and better... the man who takes you away from another one — the one with whom you are betraying someone else — the one who means to you both bliss and sin at once!

CECILIA
Let me loose, Amadeus.

AMADEUS
No more beautiful adventure will ever blossom by the wayside for either one of us, Cecilia, as long as we may live!

CECILIA
And none more dangerous, Amadeus!

AMADEUS
Wasn't that what you were longing for...?

CECILIA
Good-night, Amadeus.

AMADEUS
Cecilia! (*He holds her fast and draws her closer to himself*)

CURTAIN

THE THIRD ACT



THE SAME ROOM. It is the morning of the following day. The stage is empty at first. Then Amadeus enters from his room at the left. He wears a dressing-gown, but is otherwise fully dressed. He passes slowly and pensively across the room to the writing desk, from which he picks up the waiting pile of letters. Then he puts the letters down again. He feels chilly, looks around, notices that a window is open, and goes to close it. Then he stands listening for a while at the door to Cecilia's room. Finally he returns to the writing desk and begins to pull out manuscripts from its drawers.

AMADEUS
Let's get things in order.... I wonder how this is going to turn out? — I'll write her from some place along my route. I shall never come back here any more.... I couldn't stand it... no, I couldn't! (*Holding a manuscript in his hand*) The Solo — her Solo! Well, I shall not be present to hear her sing it.

CHAMBERMAID (*entering*)
The men are here to take away the trunk. Here's the check from the expressman.

AMADEUS
All right. Tell them to use the back stairs in taking out the things.

CHAMBERMAID (*goes out*)

AMADEUS
... When I say good-by to-morrow, she won't guess it is forever.... And the boy... the boy...? (*He walks back and forth*)... But it has to be. (*Abruptly*) I'll leave this very evening — not to-morrow. Yes, this very evening. (*He begins to pile up sheet music*) I'll have a talk with the Director. If he says no, I'll simply break away. I won't come back here. (*He goes to Cecilia's door again*) I suppose she's still asleep. (*He comes forward and sits down on the couch, leaning his head in his hands*) We have to take lunch together, and she won't guess that it is for the last time.... She won't guess.... And why not? Let her find out... right now... I am going to have it out with her. Yes, indeed. (*Rising*) One can't write a thing of that kind. I'll tell her everything. I'll tell her that I can't bear it — that it drives me crazy to think of the other fellow. And she'll understand. And even if she should plead with me to forgive her... even if she... oh! (*He goes to her door*) I must tell her at once.... Oh, I feel like choking her!... Cecilia! (*He knocks at her door, but gets no answer*) What does that mean? (*He goes into her room*) She's gone! (*He stays away for about half a minute and comes back by way of the door leading to the garden; then he rings*) Where can she....

CHAMBERMAID (*enters*)

AMADEUS (*with pretended unconcern*)
Has my wife gone out?

CHAMBERMAID
Yes, sir — quite a while ago.

AMADEUS
Oh...?

CHAMBERMAID
It must be nearly two hours now. She said she would be back about one o'clock.

AMADEUS
All right. Thank you.

CHAMBERMAID
Can I bring in your breakfast now, sir?

AMADEUS
Oh, yes — I had almost forgotten. And a cup of tea, please.

CHAMBERMAID (*goes out*)

AMADEUS (*alone*)
Gone!... Well, there is nothing peculiar in that.... Probably to the opera.... But why didn't she tell me...? (*He cowers suddenly*) To him...? No, that couldn't be possible! Oh, no!... And why not?... A woman like her.... There is nothing to keep her from going to him.... (*With a threatening gesture*) If I only had him here!... (*With sudden inspiration*) But that's what I might... that would be.... To confront him — that's it! To stand face to face with him!... Thus more than one thing might be straightened out.... No, she is not with him.... Where did I get that idea?... That's all over!... But that's what I'll do!... Either I or he!... Many things might then... everything might then be set right.... He or I!... But to live on like this, while he... I'll go to Albert. It must be done this very day! (*He disappears into his own room*)

ALBERT (*enters*)

CHAMBERMAID (*follows him, carrying the breakfast tray*) I'll tell the Master at once, sir. (*She puts the tray on a small table and goes out to the left*)

ALBERT (*picks up a moon-shaped roll from the tray and begins to nibble at one of its tips*)

AMADEUS (*enters, having changed his dressing-gown for a coat*)

CHAMBERMAID (*follows him, passes quickly across the room and goes out*)

AMADEUS
Oh, there you are!

ALBERT
Yes. I'm not too early, I hope? Are you ready? I want to read you the third act. (*He takes some papers from his overcoat pocket*) You know the setting, of course — the park, the villa, the plane tree. But first of all I must tell you something. Do you remember Mr. von Rabagas, with whom my wife fell in love? I have retouched him slightly. He's going to be cross-eyed. And now I am curious to see what Marie's attitude will be toward him.

AMADEUS (*nervously*)
All right — later. For the moment there are more important things.

ALBERT
More important...?

AMADEUS
Yes, I want you to do me a great service... a service that will brook no delay. You have to act as my second.

ALBERT (*rising*)
Your...? Twaddle! You'll simply refuse the challenge! You're not going to let yourself be killed for the sake of Madame Philine — oh, no!

AMADEUS
It is not a question of Philine. And I have not been challenged. I shall issue the challenge. And for that reason I want you to look up our friend Winter at once, and then I must trouble both of you to call on Prince Sigismund, and tell him....

ALBERT (*interrupting him and breaking into laughter*)
Oh, Prince Sigismund! — Thank you ever so much!

AMADEUS (*surprised*)
What's the matter with you?

ALBERT
How obliging! You mean to present me with an ending for the play we concocted yesterday. Thanks. But it's too banal for me — nobody would take any stock in it. I have thought of something much better. You are to be poisoned — yes, sir. And can you guess by whom? — By a brand-new character — one of the secret lovers of your wife.

AMADEUS (*furiously*)
It doesn't interest me in the least. Stop it, please! I'm not making up endings for your fool comedies! This is real life... we are right in the midst of it!

ALBERT
You don't mean...?! Well, if I have to stand this unseemly and ridiculous interruption... what do you want of me anyhow?

AMADEUS
Haven't you understood? The two of you are to challenge Prince Sigismund on my behalf.

ALBERT
Prince Sigismund... on your behalf.... (*He bursts into laughter*)

AMADEUS
You seem to think it very funny, but I assure you....

ALBERT
The point is not that you seem funny to *me*. It's probably balanced by the fact that a lot of people who have thought you funny until now, will all of a sudden think you very sensible... though they ought to ask themselves, if they had a little logic: why should Mr. Amadeus Adams become jealous on this particular day?... Up to the twenty-third of October he was not, and all at once, on the twenty-third, he is....

AMADEUS
A lot of things have changed since yesterday.

ALBERT
Have changed...? Since yesterday...? Well, I declare!

AMADEUS (*after a pause*)
So that you didn't believe it either?

ALBERT
To confess the truth — no.

AMADEUS
Which means that I am living among a lot of people who....

ALBERT
Will be in the right ultimately. Why should that arouse your indignation? If we were to live long enough, every lie that's floating about would probably become true. Listen to those who belie you, and you will know the truth about yourself. Gossip knows very rarely what we are doing, but almost always whither we are drifting.

AMADEUS
We didn't know we were drifting this way — that much you will admit, I hope.

ALBERT
And yet it had to come. Friendship between two people of different sexes is always dangerous — even when they are married. If there is too much mutual understanding between our souls, many things are swept along that we would rather keep back; and when our senses are attracted mutually, the suction affects much more of our souls than we would care to have involved. That's a universal law, my dear chap, for which the profound uncertainty of all earthly relations between man and woman must be held responsible. And only he who doesn't know it, will trust himself or anybody else. — If you don't mind? (*He begins to butter one of the rolls*)

AMADEUS
So you think you understand...?

ALBERT
Of course! That's my specialty, don't you know?

AMADEUS

Well, if you understand what has happened, and understand it must have happened — then you will also understand that I must face the logical consequences.

ALBERT
Logical consequences...? Here I am talking wisdom, and you clamor for nonsense. And that's what you call logical consequences?... My opinion is rather, that you are about to behave like a perfect fool. Anybody else might do what you now propose: you are the only one who mustn't. For when you propose such a thing, it becomes illogical, ungenerous, not to say dishonest. You want to call a man to account for something which, as he sees it, has been declared explicitly permissible.... In his place I should laugh in your face. If anybody has the right to be indignant here, and to demand an account, it is the Prince himself, and nobody else — as he has not deceived you, but you him.

AMADEUS
Well, that's all one, as he undoubtedly will demand an account.

ALBERT
To do so, he must know.

AMADEUS
I'll see to that.

ALBERT
You mean to tell him?

AMADEUS
If you hold it the shortest road to what I have in mind...?

ALBERT
There's a man of honor for you! And is that the discretion you owe the woman you love, do you think?

AMADEUS
Call me illogical, ungenerous, indiscreet — anything you please! I can't help myself! I love Cecilia — do you hear? And I want to go on living with her. But I can't do so until some sort of amends have been made for the past — in my own eyes, in hers, and — I confess it — in the eyes of the world. Sigismund and I must meet, man to man — nothing else can end my trouble.

ALBERT
And how can it make the slightest difference that you two shoot off your guns in the air?

AMADEUS
One of us must out of the way, Albert!... Won't you understand at last?

ALBERT
Now, my dear chap, that's carrying it a little too far! All the time I have thought you were talking of a duel — and now I find that you are after his life!

AMADEUS

Later on you may feel sorry that you could not refrain from inept jesting in a moment like this even. The case is urgent, Albert. Please make up your mind.

ALBERT
And suppose he should refuse?

AMADEUS
He is a nobleman.

ALBERT
He is religious. His father is one of the leaders of the Clerical Party in the Upper House and a vice-president of the Society for the Prevention of Dueling.

AMADEUS
Well, such things are not inherited. And if he won't, I shall know how to make him. There's no other way out of it. There can be no other alternative, if I am to go on living — with or without her. That will set everything right, but nothing else will. It's the one thing that can clear the air about us. Until it is over, we dare not belong to each other again or — be happy.

ALBERT
I hope Cecilia won't insist on killing off Philine and a few others. That would be just as sensible, but would complicate the situation a great deal.

AMADEUS
Won't you go, please!

ALBERT
Yes, I am going.... And how about our opera?

AMADEUS
Oh, we'll have plenty of time to talk of that. However, just to reassure you — all that is finished lies here in the second drawer, everything properly arranged.

ALBERT
And who is to compose the third act?

AMADEUS
It can be given as a fragment, with some kind of ballet as a filler.

ALBERT
Right you are! Something like "Harlequin as Electrician," or "Forget-me-not." (*He goes out*)

AMADEUS (*remains alone for a while; at first he seems to ponder on something; then he returns to the writing desk and falls to work on his papers; a knock is heard at the door leading to the garden*) What is it?

PETER (*outside*)
It's me, papa. Can I come in?

AMADEUS
Certainly, Peter. Come on.

GOVERNESS (*entering with Peter*)
Good morning.

AMADEUS
Good morning. (*He kisses Peter*) Is it not a little too cold for him out there?

GOVERNESS
He's very warmly dressed, and besides the sun is shining beautifully.

PETER
Papa, have you seen what mamma brought me?

AMADEUS
What is it?

PETER
A theater — a big theater!

AMADEUS
Is that so? And you have got it already?

PETER
Of course. It's over there in the summer-house. Would you care to look at it?

AMADEUS (*glances inquiringly at the governess*)

GOVERNESS
Madame brought it to our room quite early, while Peter was still asleep.

AMADEUS
I see.

PETER
I can play theater already. There is a king, and a peasant, and a bride, and a devil — one that's all red — almost as red as the king himself. And in the back there is a mill, and a sky, and a forest, and a hunter.... Won't you come and look at it, papa?

AMADEUS (*seated on the couch, with the boy standing between his knees; speaking absentmindedly*) Of course I must come and look at it.

CHAMBERMAID (*entering*)
Sir....

AMADEUS
What is it?

CHAMBERMAID
His Highness asks if you'll see him.

AMADEUS
What highness?

CHAMBERMAID
His Highness, the Prince Lohsenstein.

AMADEUS (*rising*)
What?

GOVERNESS
Come, Peter — we'll go back and play in the summer-house. (*She goes out with Peter*)

AMADEUS (*with dignity*)
Tell the Prince.... (*Turning away from her*) One moment, please. (*To himself*) What can that mean...? (*Abruptly*) Ask him to come in.

CHAMBERMAID (*goes out*)

AMADEUS (*walks quickly to and fro, but stops at some distance from the door when Sigismund enters*)

SIGISMUND (*is slender, blonde, twenty-six, elegantly dressed, but appears in no respect foppish; he bows to Amadeus*) Good-morning.

AMADEUS (*takes a few steps forward to meet him and nods politely*)

SIGISMUND (*looks around a little shyly, but wholly free from any ridiculous embarrassment; his manner is in every respect dignified; there is a slight smile on his face*) We have not seen each other for some time, and you'll probably assume that my visit to-day has a special reason.

AMADEUS
Naturally. (*Pointing to a chair*) Please.

SIGISMUND
Thank you. (*He comes nearer, but remains standing*) I have decided to take this step — which has not come easy to me, I can assure you — because I find the situation in which we... in which all of us have been placed, untenable and, in a certain sense, ridiculous... and because I think that, in one way or another, it should be brought to an end. The sole object of my visit is to put before you a proposition.

AMADEUS
I'm listening.

SIGISMUND
I don't want to waste any words. My proposition is that you get a divorce from your wife.

AMADEUS (*shrinks back for a moment, staring at Sigismund; then, after a pause he says calmly*) You wish

to marry Cecilia?

SIGISMUND
There is nothing I wish more eagerly.

AMADEUS
And what is the attitude of Cecilia toward your intentions?

SIGISMUND
Not encouraging so far.

AMADEUS (*puzzled*)
Cecilia is absolutely in a position to decide for herself. And of course, she would also have the right to leave me — whenever and howsoever it might please her to do so. For that reason you must pardon me if I find the object of your visit incomprehensible, to say the least.

SIGISMUND
You'll soon find it comprehensible, I think. The discouraging attitude of Mrs. Adams-Ortenburg proves nothing at all in this connection, I must say. As long as Mrs. Adams-Ortenburg has not been set free by you — even if that be done against her own will — she is, in a sense, bound to you. To get this matter fully cleared up, it seems to me necessary that you yourself, my dear Master, insist on a divorce. Mrs. Adams-Ortenburg will not be in a position to choose freely until she has been divorced from you. Until then the struggle between us two will not be on equal terms — as, I trust, you would like to have it.

AMADEUS
There can be no talk of any struggle here. You misunderstand the actual state of affairs in a manner that seems to me incomprehensible. For I have no right to suppose that Cecilia has made any secret of the more deep-lying reasons that have so far prevented us from considering a dissolution of our marriage.

SIGISMUND
Certainly, I am aware of those reasons, but to me they don't by any means seem sufficiently pressing — not even from your own viewpoint — to exclude all thought of a divorce. And I am anxious to assure you that, under all circumstances, I shall feel bound to treat those reasons with the most profound respect.

AMADEUS
What do you mean?

SIGISMUND
You know, my dear Master, that the reverence I have for your art, even if I am not always capable of grasping it, equals the admiration I feel for the singing of Mrs. Adams-Ortenburg. I know how much you two mutually owe to each other, and how you — if I may say so — complement each other musically. And it would never occur to me to put any difficulties whatsoever in the way of your continued artistic relationship. I am equally aware of the tenderness with which you regard your child — for whom, by the way, as you probably know, I have a great deal of devotion — and I can give you my word that the doors leading to the quarters of little Peter will always stand open to you.

AMADEUS
In other words, you would have no objection to seeing the former husband of your — of the wife — of the Princess Lohsenstein, admitted to your house as a friend?

SIGISMUND
Any such objection would be regarded by me as an insult to your — to my — to Mrs. Cecilia Adams-Ortenburg, as well as to you, my dear Master. With those provisions made, the new arrangement, which I am taking the liberty to suggest, would be more sensible and — if you'll allow me a frank expression — more decent than the one to which all of us now have to submit. I am convinced, my dear Master, that, when you have had chance to consider the matter calmly, you will not only agree with me, but you will be surprised that this simple solution of an unbearable situation has not occurred to yourself long ago. As for me, I want to add that, to me personally, this solution seems the only possible one. Yes, I don't hesitate to say that I would leave the city, without hope of ever seeing Mrs. Cecilia again, rather than keep on compromising her in a manner that must be equally painful to all of us.

AMADEUS
Oh, has it come to that all at once? Well, if the matter doesn't trouble Cecilia or me, I think *you* might well regard it with indifference. I hope you know that we have arranged our life to suit ourselves, without the least regard for popular gossip, and that I don't care at all whether or no Cecilia be compromised — as you call it.

SIGISMUND
I know you don't. But I feel differently. A lady to whom I'm so devoted, and whom I respect so highly that I would lead her to the altar, must appear spotless to God and man alike.

AMADEUS
You might have kept that in mind before. Your previous behavior has given no indication of such a view. You have been waiting for my wife in the immediate vicinity of the opera; you have been walking with her for hours at a time; you have visited her in the country; you have followed her to Berlin and come back here in her company....

SIGISMUND (*surprised*)
But it was in your power to stop all those things, if they didn't suit you....

AMADEUS
Stop them... because they didn't suit...? What has that to do with what I am talking of? — I am not the person who has found this situation unbearable and compromising.

SIGISMUND
Oh, I understand. Considering, however, that you have placed such emphasis on your indifference to popular gossip, I must say that your tone sounds pretty excited. But permit me to assure you that this impresses me rather pleasantly. Bear in mind that I am merely human. What young man in my place would have refrained from meeting the adored one, when everything was rendered so easy for him? And nevertheless I didn't visit the Pustertal or make the tour to Berlin without an inward struggle — in fact, I have often had to struggle with myself while waiting for her near the opera. And I cannot tell you how I have suffered under the searching glances directed at Mrs. Adams-Ortenburg and myself when we were having supper together after one of the

Berlin performances, for instance, or when we went for an afternoon drive in the Tiergarten. Not to speak of the painful impression my aunt's remarks made on me when I called to bid her good-by! Really, I can't find words to express it.

AMADEUS
How much longer do you mean to keep up this remarkable comedy, my dear Prince?

SIGISMUND (*drawing back*)
Do you mean....

AMADEUS
What in the world makes you appear before me in a part which I don't know whether to call tasteless or foolhardy?

SIGISMUND
Sir!... Oh...! You think.... I see now.... And you imagine that I would have crossed your threshold again under such circumstances?

AMADEUS
Why should *that* particular thing not be imagined?

SIGISMUND
Later on we shall get back to what you think of me. But a third person is concerned in this matter, and I am not going to stand....

AMADEUS
May I ask whether you have been equally angry with everyone who has dared to question the virtue of Mrs. Adams-Ortenburg?

SIGISMUND
You are at least the first one who has dared to question it to my face, and the last one who may dare to do so unpunished.

AMADEUS
Do you think the punishment threatening the impertinent one in your mind will be apt to restore the reputation of Cecilia? Do you think it would put an end to the gossip if you, of all people, tried to champion the honor of Mrs. Adams-Ortenburg?

SIGISMUND
Who could, if not I?

AMADEUS
If it is *not* a comedy you are now playing, then you haven't the right even!

SIGISMUND
Do you mean to say that Cecilia is the only woman in the world who must stand unprotected against *any* slander?

AMADEUS
If you are telling the truth, Prince Sigismund, then there is only one person in the world who has the right to protect Cecilia, and that person am I.

SIGISMUND
Considering what has happened, I have excellent reason to think that you will neither avail yourself of that right nor fulfill that duty.

AMADEUS
You are mistaken. And if you will take the trouble of returning home, you will soon be convinced of your mistake.

SIGISMUND
What do you mean?

AMADEUS
I mean simply that two of my friends are now on their way to your house on my behalf....

SIGISMUND
Well...?

AMADEUS
To demand reparation for what... (*looking Sigismund straight in the eye*) I believed you guilty of.

SIGISMUND (*takes a step back; a pause ensues during which they stare hard at each other*) You have challenged.... (*Reaching out his hand*) That's fine!

AMADEUS (*does not accept the proffered hand*)

SIGISMUND
But it's splendid! I can assure you that the whole matter now assumes quite a different aspect. And, of course, I shall be at your disposal just the same, if you insist.

AMADEUS (*draws a deep breath, looks long at Sigismund, and shakes his head at last*) No, I won't any longer. (*He shakes hands with him, and then begins walking to and fro, muttering to himself*) Cecilia.... Cecilia...! (*Returning to Sigismund and addressing him in a totally different tone*) Won't you please be seated, Sigismund?

SIGISMUND
No, thank you.

AMADEUS (*feeling repelled and suspicious again*)
Just as you please.

SIGISMUND
Don't misunderstand me, please. But I suppose this ends our conference, my dear Master. (*Looking around*) And yet I must admit that your rude treatment has made me feel a great deal more at ease. Isn't that strange?

And in spite of the fact that, after this unexpected turn, my hopes must be held practically — I beg your pardon! — completely disposed of.... In spite of this I feel actually in much better spirits than I have done for a long time. Even if I am not to have the happiness of which I have foolishly dared to dream so long....

AMADEUS
Was it so very foolish?

SIGISMUND (*good-humoredly*)
Oh, yes. But this is at least an acceptable conclusion. (*Shaking his head*) It seems queer! If I hadn't come here at this very moment, you might never have learned — you might never have believed — might have believed that Cecilia.... And one of us might perhaps — must perhaps have.... (*He makes a gesture to complete the sentence*)

AMADEUS
It was indeed a strange coincidence that made you choose this particular moment....

SIGISMUND
Coincidence, you say? Oh, no, there are no coincidences — as you will discover sooner or later. (*Pause*) Well, good-by then, and give my regards to Mrs.... Adams...

AMADEUS
You can safely call her Cecilia.

SIGISMUND
... and tell her, please, that she mustn't be angry with me for having taken such a step without her knowledge. Of course, my going away won't surprise her. When leaving her yesterday, I told her that I couldn't continue this kind of existence.

AMADEUS
And she...? What did she say?

SIGISMUND (*hesitatingly*)
She....

AMADEUS (*excited again*)
She tried to keep you here...?

SIGISMUND
Yes.

AMADEUS
So that after all...!

SIGISMUND
Now she won't try any longer, my dear Master. (*With a wistful smile*) I have served my purpose.

AMADEUS

What do you mean?

SIGISMUND
Oh, I can see now why she needed me — of course, you were not at all aware of it!

AMADEUS
Why did she need you?

SIGISMUND
Simply and solely as a means of winning you back.

AMADEUS
What makes you think...?

SIGISMUND
What...? That she has succeeded.

AMADEUS
No, Sigismund — she hadn't lost me — in spite of all that had happened. In fact, I feel as if I had rather lost her than she — me.

SIGISMUND
That's awfully kind of you. But now — God be with you!

AMADEUS (*with something like emotion*)
And when shall we see you again?

SIGISMUND
I don't know. Perhaps never. — Please don't imagine that I might take my own life. I shall get over it, being still young. — Oh, my dear Master, if things could only become what they used to be, so that I could sit here at the fireplace while Cecilia was singing — or hammer away at the piano after supper...!

AMADEUS
Don't be quite so modest, please! The fame of your piano playing has reached Berlin even, I hear.

SIGISMUND
So she has told you that, too?! — But you see, dear Master, all that can never come back — we could no longer feel at ease with each other.... So — never to meet again!

AMADEUS
Never.... Why? Perhaps I shall see you very soon alone. I am also — going away.

SIGISMUND
I know. We were talking of it yesterday, in the dining car. You are to conduct your — number-which-one is it now?

AMADEUS

The fourth.

SIGISMUND
So you have got that far already? — And where are you going anyhow?

AMADEUS
To the Rhine district first of all; then by way of Munich to Italy — Venice, Milan, Rome.

SIGISMUND
Rome...? There we may possibly meet. But you'll have to pardon me for not coming to your concerts. So far I have not been able to understand your symphonies.... But I am sure I shall sometime! One does grow more and more clever, and sorrow and experiences in particular have a maturing influence.... "Now he's making fun of it," I suppose you are thinking. But, really, I am not in a very humorous mood. Farewell, my dear Master — and my most respectful compliments to your wife. (*He goes out*)

AMADEUS (*walks back and forth; takes a few deep breaths, as if relieved; goes out into the garden; returns; sits down at the piano and plays a few improvisations; gets up and goes to the writing desk, where he begins to look for something among the papers*) Where's that Solo?... She's going to sing it, and I shall be present...! (*He seats himself at the piano again, apparently in a very happy mood*) Cecilia!... Cecilia!

CECILIA (*enters*)

AMADEUS (*rising*)
Ah, there you are at last, Cecilia!

CECELIA (*very calmly*)
Good-morning, Amadeus.

AMADEUS
A little late.

CECILIA (*smiling*)
Yes. (*She takes off her hat and goes to the mirror to arrange her hair*)

AMADEUS
What made you get out so early?

CECILIA
Various things I had to attend to.

AMADEUS
And may one ask...?

CECILIA
One may. — Look here, what I have got for you. (*She takes a letter from a small bag*)

AMADEUS

What's that? (*He takes it*) What...? My letter to Philine...! Did you go to her, Cecilia?

CECILIA
Well, I felt a little nervous about it. Now I think it was rather silly of me.

AMADEUS
And how...?

CECILIA
Oh, the simplest thing in the world! I asked her for it, and she gave it to me. It was lying in an open drawer in her writing desk — with others. I think you can call yourself lucky.

AMADEUS
Cecilia! (*He tears the letter to pieces and throws these into the fireplace*)

CECILIA
Well, you would never have made up your mind to demand it of her, and that would have kept me in a state of irritation. I can't have anything like that on my mind when I want to work. — And now that's settled. (*She turns away*) Then I went to the opera, too. I have had a talk with the Director. He's going to indorse my request to be set free.

AMADEUS
Your request to be set free...?

CECILIA
Yes, I shall go to Berlin on the first of January.

AMADEUS
But, Cecilia, we haven't talked it over yet....

CECILIA
What's the use of postponing a thing that's already settled in my own mind? — You know I never like to do that.

AMADEUS
But it means a whole year of separation!

CECILIA
To start with. But I think it might be just as well to prepare ourselves for a still longer period.

AMADEUS
Do you mean to leave me, Cecilia?!

CECILIA
What else can I do, Amadeus? That ought to be as clear to you as it is to me.

AMADEUS

So it would have been a little while ago, Cecilia. But I have come to see our future in a different light.... Cecilia... Sigismund has been here!

CECILIA
Sigismund?!... You have talked with him?... What did he want?

AMADEUS
What did he want...? Your hand.

CECILIA
And you refused...?

AMADEUS
He is sending you his farewell greetings through me, Cecilia.

CECILIA
So that's what has put you in such a good humor all at once! (*Pause*) And if he hadn't come here?

AMADEUS
If he hadn't come here....

CECILIA
Speak out, please!

AMADEUS (*remains silent*)

CECILIA
You didn't mean to... to fight him?

AMADEUS
I did. Albert was on his way to him at the time.

CECILIA
What vanity, Amadeus!

AMADEUS
No, not vanity, Cecilia. I love you.

CECILIA (*remains wholly unresponsive*)

AMADEUS
You can't guess, of course, what took place within me while his words were gradually bringing home the truth to me! Once more the doors of heaven have been thrown open to me!

CECILIA
The only thing you forget is that they must remain closed to me forever.

AMADEUS

Don’t say that, Cecilia. What has happened to me in the past seems so very insignificant, after all.

CECILIA
Insignificant, you say? — And if it had happened to me, it would have been so significant that people should have had to kill or be killed on that account? How can you think then, that I might get over it so easily?

AMADEUS
How can I...? Because you have proved it already. You knew just what had happened, and yet you became mine again.... You knew that I had been faithless, while you had kept your faith, and yet....

CECILIA
You say that I have kept my faith? — No, I haven’t! And even if I should seem faithful to you, I have long ago ceased to be so in my own mind. *I* know the desires that have burned within me.... *I* know how often my body has trembled and yearned in the presence of some man.... And what I told you last night — that I am waiting with wide-open arms, full of longings and expectations — that’s true, Amadeus — no less true than it is that I am standing face to face with you now.

AMADEUS
If that be true, what has kept you from satisfying all your longings — you, who have been as free as I have?

CECILIA
I am a woman, Amadeus. And we seem to be like that. Something makes us hesitate even when we have already made up our minds.

AMADEUS
And because you seemed guilty in your own mind, you remained silent?... And for no other reason have you left me — me, whose sufferings you might have relieved by a single word — to believe you as guilty as myself?

CECILIA
Perhaps....

AMADEUS
And how long did you mean to let me go on believing that?

CECILIA
Until it became true, Amadeus.

AMADEUS
But there has been enough of it now, Cecilia. It will never become true... never after this.

CECILIA
Where do you get that idea, Amadeus? It is going to be true. Do you think, perhaps, that all this was meant as a kind of ordeal for you? Do you think I was playing a childish comedy in order to punish you, and that now, when you have discovered the truth prematurely, I shall sink into your arms and declare everything right again? Have you really imagined that everything could now be forgotten, and that we might resume our

marriage relations at the exact point where they were interrupted? How can you possibly have wished that such might be the case — so that our marriage would be like thousands of others, where both deceive each other, and become reconciled, and deceive each other again — just as the moment's whim happens to move them?

AMADEUS
We have neither deceived each other, nor become reconciled — we have been free, and have merely found each other again.

CECILIA
Each other, you say?... As if that were possible! What is it then, that has made me seem so desirable to you all at once? Not the fact that I am Cecilia — oh, no! But the fact that I seem to have come back another woman. And have I really become yours again? Not at all! Not unless you have grown so modest all at once that you can be satisfied with a happiness that might have fallen to somebody else perhaps, if he had merely chanced to be on hand at that particular moment.

AMADEUS (*shrinking back*)
But even if last night be sacrificed to this fixed idea of yours, Cecilia — it is daylight now — we are awake — and in this moment of clear light you must feel, no less than I, that we love each other, Cecilia — love as we have never loved before.

CECILIA
This moment might prove deceptive — and I am sure it would. No other moment would be more apt to prove such. Do you think those many moments in which we felt our tenderness gradually ebbing away — those many moments when we felt the lure of other loves — do you think them less worthy of consideration than this one? The only thing urging us together now is our fear of the final leave-taking. And our feelings at this moment make a pretty poor sample upon which to base an eternity. I don't trust them. What has happened once, may... nay, must repeat itself — to-morrow — or two years from now — or five... in a more indiscreet manner, perhaps, or in a manner more tragical — but certainly in a manner to be much more regretted.

AMADEUS
Oh, no — never again! Now — after what I have felt and experienced lately, I can vouch for myself.

CECILIA
I don't feel equally certain of myself, Amadeus.

AMADEUS
That doesn't scare me, Cecilia, for now I'm prepared to fight for you — now I'm worthy and capable of fighting for you. Hereafter you shall never more be left unprotected as you were in the past — my tenderness will guard you.

CECILIA
But I don't want to be guarded! I shall no longer permit you to guard me! And I can no more give you any promises than I care to accept yours.

AMADEUS

And if I should forgo them myself — if I should risk it on a mere uncertainty?

CECILIA
That's more than I dare — whether the risk concern you or myself... more than I would risk even with certainty in mind. (*She turns away from him*)

AMADEUS
Then I cannot possibly understand you, Cecilia. What is it you want to make us pay for so dearly — yes, both of us? Is it our guilt or our happiness?

CECILIA
Why should either one of them be paid for? What's the use of such a word between us? Neither one of us has done anything that requires atonement. Neither one of us has any right to reproach the other one. Both of us have been free, and each one has used his freedom in accordance with his own desire and ability. I think nothing has happened but what must happen. We have trusted each other too much — or too little. We were neither made to love each other faithfully forever nor to maintain a pure friendship. Others have become resigned — I can't — and you mustn't allow yourself, Amadeus. Our experiment has failed. Let us admit our disillusionment. That can be borne. But I have no curiosity to find how it tastes when everything comes to an end in sheer loathing.

AMADEUS
Comes to an end, you say? — But that can't be possible, Cecilia! It can't be possible that we should really leave each other — part from each other like strangers! We are still face to face — each of us can feel the closeness of the other one — and that's why you cannot yet realize what it would mean. Consider all the things that might come into your life as well as into mine during a separation of that kind — so prolonged and so void of responsibility — things that now have no place in your imagination even, and for which there could be no reparation.

CECILIA
Could they be worse than what has already befallen me? Faithfulness to each other in the ordinary sense matters least of all, I should think. And we could probably more easily find our way back to each other sometime from almost any other experience than that adventure of last night, or from a moment of self-deception like this one.

AMADEUS
Find our way back, you say...?

CECILIA
It's also possible that, after a couple of years, we won't care to do so — that everything may be over between us to such an extent that we cannot imagine it now. That's possible, I say. But if we stayed together now, everything would be over within the next few seconds. For then we should be no better than all those we have despised hitherto — the one difference being that we had arranged ourselves more comfortably than the rest.

ALBERT (*entering*)

I beg your pardon for coming in unannounced like this, but....

CECILIA (*withdraws toward the background*)

AMADEUS (*going to meet Albert*)
Yes, I know — you didn't find the Prince — he has been here himself.

ALBERT
What does that mean?

AMADEUS
That there was no reason why I should want to kill him.

ALBERT
I see. — Well, I'll be hanged if I haven't suspected something of the kind myself! — Then I suppose everything is once more in perfect order in this house?

AMADEUS
Yes, in perfect order. When I return, Cecilia will be in Berlin, and I shall not follow her.

ALBERT
What? Then you are going to ask for a separation after all?

CECILIA (*approaching them*)
No, we are not going to ask for a separation. We'll just separate.

ALBERT
What?... (*He looks from one to the other; pause*) Really I like that. Indeed, I do. I think both of you are splendid — but especially you, Cecilia — and, of course, there is nothing else left for you to do now.

PETER (*enters, carrying some of his puppets*)
Papa! Mamma! I can play theater beautifully. Won't you come and look? Oh, please come!

CECILIA (*strokes his hair*)

AMADEUS (*remains standing at some distance from them*)

ALBERT
Well, isn't this just like life — the life you are always talking of! This should be the moment when you had to fall into each others' arms with absolute certainty, if you had had the luck to be imaginatively created — that is, not by me, of course.

CECILIA
No, the boy means too much to both of us to make that possible — don't you think so, Amadeus?

AMADEUS (*losing control of himself after a glance at Peter*) All at once to be alone in the world again — it's a thought I can hardly face!

CECILIA
But we shall be somewhere in that world, you know — your child, and the mother of your child. We are not

parting as enemies, after all.... (*With a smile*) I am even ready to come here and sing that Solo of yours — although we shall not be able to study it together.

AMADEUS
It's more than I can bear...!

CECILIA
It will have to be borne. We must work — both of us.

ALBERT (*to Amadeus*)
Yes, and it remains to be seen what effect a real sorrow like this may have on you. It's just what you have lacked so far. I expect you'll get a lot out of it. In a sense, I might almost envy you.

PETER
What's the matter?... Look here, mamma, how they jump about! That's the king, and this is the devil.

ALBERT
Come on, sonny, and play your piece to *me*. But I insist that the hero must either marry in the end, or be carried off by the devil. In either case you can go home quite satisfied when the curtain drops. (*He goes out with Peter*)

CECILIA (*after a glance at Amadeus, starts to follow them*)

AMADEUS
Cecilia!

CECILIA (*turns back*)

AMADEUS (*passionately*)
Why didn't you show me the door, Cecilia, when you knew...?

CECILIA
Well, *did* I know?... I have loved you, Amadeus. And all I wanted, perhaps, was that the inevitable end should be worthy of our love — that we should part after a final moment of bliss, and with a pang.

AMADEUS
With a pang, you say...? Do you really feel anything like that?

CECILIA (*coming close to him and speaking very gently*)
Why don't you try to understand me, Amadeus? I feel it just as keenly as you do. But there is another thing I feel more strongly than you, and it is well for us both that I do. It is this, Amadeus, that we have been so much to each other that we must keep the memory of it pure. If that was nothing but an adventure last night, then we have never been worthy of our past happiness.... If it was a farewell, then we may expect new happiness in the future... perhaps.... (*She starts toward the garden*)

AMADEUS
And that's our reward, then, for having always been honest to each other!

CECILIA (*turning toward him again*)
Honest, you call it...? Have we always been that?

AMADEUS
Cecilia!

CECILIA
No, I can't think so any longer. Let everything else have been honest — but that both of us should have resigned ourselves so promptly when you told me of your passion for the Countess and I confessed my affection for Sigismund — that was not honest. If each of us had then flung his scorn, his bitterness, his despair into the face of the other one, instead of trying to appear self-controlled and superior — then we should have been honest — which, as it was, we were not. (*She walks across the veranda outside and disappears into the garden*)

AMADEUS (*to himself*)
All right — then we were not honest. (*After a pause*) And suppose we had been?! (*For a moment he seems to consider; then he goes to the writing desk and puts the manuscript music lying there into the little handbag; after a glance into the garden, he goes into his own room, returning at once with his hat and overcoat; then he opens the handbag again and picks out a manuscript, which he places on the piano; then he goes out rapidly, taking hat, overcoat and handbag with him; a brief pause follows*)

CECILIA (*enters and notices that the handbag is gone; she goes quickly into Amadeus' room, but returns immediately; she crosses the room to the main entrance and remains standing there, opening her arms widely at first, and then letting them sink down again; going to the piano, she catches sight of the manuscript lying there and picks it up; while looking at it, she sinks down on the piano stool*)

PETER (appears on the veranda with Albert and calls from there) Mother!

CECILIA (*does not hear him*)

ALBERT (*observing that Cecilia is alone and sunk in grief, takes Peter with him into the garden again*)

CECILIA (*begins to weep softly and lets her head sink down on the piano*)

CURTAIN

Countess Mizzi (1907)

OR, THE FAMILY REUNION

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

Original German Title: 'Komtesse Mizzi oder Der Familientag'

Translated by Edwin Björkman, 1915

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PERSONS
COUNTESS MIZZIE



Volkstheater, Vienna, 1928 — where this play received its premier in 1907

PERSONS



Count Arpad Pazmandy
Mizzie, His daughter
Prince Egon Ravenstein
Lolo Langhuber
Philip
Professor Windhofer
Wasner
The Gardener
The Valet

COUNTESS MIZZIE



THE GARDEN OF Count Arpad. In the background, tall iron fence. Near the middle of this, but a little more to the right, there is a gate. In the foreground, at the left, appears the façade of the two-storied villa, which used to be an imperial hunting lodge about 180 years ago and was remodeled about thirty years ago. A narrow terrace runs along the main floor, which is raised above the ground. Three wide stairs lead from the terrace down to the garden. French doors, which are standing open, lead from the terrace into the drawing-room. The windows of the upper floor are of ordinary design. Above that floor appears a small balcony, to which access is had through a dormer window. This balcony holds a profusion of flowering plants. A garden seat, a small table and an armchair stand under a tree at the right, in the foreground.

COUNT (*enters from the right; he is an elderly man with gray mustaches, but must still be counted decidedly good-looking; his bearing and manners indicate the retired officer; he wears a riding suit and carries a crop*)

VALET (*entering behind the Count*)
At what time does Your Grace desire to have dinner to-day?

COUNT (*who speaks with the laconism affected by his former colleagues, and who, at that particular moment, is engaged in lighting a huge cigar*) At two.

VALET
And when is the carriage to be ready, Your Grace?

MIZZIE (*appearing on the balcony with a palette and a bunch of brushes in one hand, calls down to her father*) Good morning, papa.

COUNT
Morning, Mizzie.

MIZZIE
You left me all alone for breakfast again, papa. Where have you been anyhow?

COUNT
Most everywhere. Rode out by way of Mauer and Rodaun. Perfectly splendid day. And what are you doing? At work already? Is there anything new to be seen soon?

MIZZIE
Yes, indeed, papa. Nothing but flowers though, as usual.

COUNT
Isn’t the professor coming to see you to-day?

MIZZIE
Yes, but not until one.

COUNT
Well, don’t let me interrupt you.

MIZZIE (*throws a kiss to him and disappears from the balcony*)

COUNT (*to the valet*)
What are you waiting for? Oh, the carriage. I’m not going out again to-day. Joseph can take a holiday. Or wait a moment. (*He calls up to the balcony*) Say, Mizzie....

MIZZIE (*reappears on the balcony*)

COUNT
Sorry to disturb you again. Do you think you’ll want the carriage to-day?

MIZZIE
No, thank you, papa. I can think of nothing.... No, thanks. (*She disappears again*)

COUNT
So Joseph can do what he pleases this afternoon. That’s — oh, see that Franz gives the nag a good rubbing down. We got a little excited this morning — both of us.

VALET (*goes out*)

COUNT (*sits down on the garden seat, picks up a newspaper from the table and begins to read*)

GARDENER (*enters*)
Good morning, Your Grace.

COUNT
Morning, Peter. What’s up?

GARDENER
With Your Grace’s permission, I have just cut the tea roses.

COUNT
Why all that lot?

GARDENER
The bush is full up. It ain’t wise, Your Grace, to leave ’em on the stem much longer. If maybe Your Grace could find some use....

COUNT
Haven’t got any. Why do you stand there looking at me? I’m not going to the city. I won’t need any flowers. Why don’t you put them in some of those vases and things that are standing about in there? Quite the fashion nowadays, isn’t it? (*He takes the bunch of flowers from the gardener and inhales their fragrance while he seems to be pondering something*) Wasn’t that a carriage that stopped here?

GARDENER

That's His Highness' pair of blacks. I know 'em by their step.

COUNT
Thanks very much then. (*He hands back the roses*)

PRINCE (*comes in by the gate*)

COUNT (*goes to meet him*)

GARDENER
Good morning, Your Highness.

PRINCE
Hello, Peter.

GARDENER (*goes out toward the right*)

PRINCE (*wears a light-colored Summer suit; is fifty-five, but doesn't look it; tall and slender; his manner of speech suggests the diplomat, who is as much at home in French as in his native tongue*)

COUNT
Delighted, old chap. How goes it?

PRINCE
Thanks. Splendid day.

COUNT (*offers him one of his gigantic cigars*)

PRINCE
No, thank you, not before lunch. Only one of my own cigarettes, if you permit. (*He takes a cigarette from his case and lights it*)

COUNT
So you've found time to drop in at last. Do you know how long you haven't been here? Three weeks.

PRINCE (*glancing toward the balcony*)
Really that long?

COUNT
What is it that makes you so scarce?

PRINCE
You mustn't mind. But you are right, of course. And even to-day I come only to say good-by.

COUNT
What — good-by?

PRINCE

I shall be off to-morrow.

COUNT
You're going away? Where?

PRINCE
The sea shore. And you — have you made any plans yet?

COUNT
I haven't given a thought to it yet — this year.

PRINCE
Well, of course, it's wonderful right here — with your enormous park. But you have to go somewhere later in the Summer?

COUNT
Don't know yet. But it's all one.

PRINCE
What's wrong now?

COUNT
Oh, my dear old friend, it's going downhill.

PRINCE
How? That's a funny way of talking, Arpad. What do you mean by downhill?

COUNT
One grows old, Egon.

PRINCE
Yes, and gets accustomed to it.

COUNT
What do you know about it — you who are five years younger?

PRINCE
Six almost. But at fifty-five the springtime of life is pretty well over. Well — one gets resigned to it.

COUNT
You have always been something of a philosopher, old chap.

PRINCE
Anyhow, I can't see what's the matter with you. You look fine. (*Seats himself; frequently during this scene he glances up at the balcony; pause*)

COUNT (*with sudden decision*)
Have you heard the latest? She's going to marry.

PRINCE
Who's going to marry?

COUNT
Do you have to ask? Can't you guess?

PRINCE
Oh, I see. Thought it might be Mizzie. And that would also.... So Lolo is going to marry.

COUNT
She is.

PRINCE
But that's hardly the "latest."

COUNT
Why not?

PRINCE
It's what she has promised, or threatened, or whatever you choose to call it, these last three years.

COUNT
Three, you say? May just as well say ten. Or eighteen. Yes, indeed. In fact, since the very start of this affair between her and me. It has always been a fixed idea with her. "If ever a decent man asks me to marry him, I'll get off the stage *stante pede*." It was almost the first thing she told me. You have heard it yourself a couple of times. And now he's come — the one she has been waiting for — and she's to get married.

PRINCE
Hope he's decent at least.

COUNT
Yes, you're very witty! But is that your only way of showing sympathy in a serious moment like this?

PRINCE
Now! (*He puts his hand on the Count's arm*)

COUNT
Well, I assure you, it's a serious moment. It's no small matter when you have lived twenty years with somebody — in a *near*-marital state; when you have been spending your best years with her, and really shared her joys and sorrows — until you have come to think at last, that it's never going to end — and then she comes to you one fine day and says: "God bless you, dear, but I'm going to get wedded on the sixteenth...." Oh, damn the whole story! (*He gets up and begins to walk about*) And I can't blame her even. Because I understand perfectly. So what can you do about it?

PRINCE
You've always been much too kind, Arpad.

COUNT
Nothing kind about it. Why shouldn't I understand? The clock has struck thirty-eight for her. And she has said adieu to her profession. So that anybody can sympathize with her feeling that there is no fun to go on as a ballet dancer retired on half pay and mistress on active service to Count Pazmandy, who'll be nothing but an old fool either, as time runs along. Of course, I have been prepared for it. And I haven't blamed her a bit— 'pon my soul!

PRINCE
So you have parted as perfect friends?

COUNT
Certainly. In fact, our leave-taking was quite jolly. 'Pon my soul, I never suspected at first how tough it would prove. It's only by degrees it has come home to me. And that's quite a remarkable story, I must say....

PRINCE
What's remarkable about it?

COUNT
I suppose I had better tell you all about it. On my way home that last time — one night last week — I had a feeling all of a sudden — I don't know how to express it... tremendously relieved, that's what I felt. Now you are a free man, I said to myself. Don't have to drive to Mayerhof Street every night God grants you, merely to dine and chatter with Lolo, or just sit there listening to her. Had come to be pretty boresome at times, you know. And then the drive home in the middle of the night, and, on top of it, to be called to account when you happened to be dining with a friend in the Casino or taking your daughter to the opera or a theater. To cut it short — I was in high feather going home that night. My head was full of plans already.... No, nothing of the kind you have in mind! But plans for traveling, as I have long wanted to do — to Africa, or India, like a free man.... That is, I should have brought my little girl along, of course.... Yes, you may well laugh at my calling her a little girl still.

PRINCE
Nothing of the kind. Mizzie looks exactly like a young girl. Like quite a young one. Especially in that Florentine straw hat she was wearing a while ago.

COUNT
Like a young girl, you say! And yet she's exactly of an age with Lolo. You know, of course! Yes, we're growing old, Egon. Every one of us. Oh, yes.... And lonely. But really, I didn't notice it to begin with. It was only by degrees it got hold of me. The first days after that farewell feast were not so very bad. But the day before yesterday, and yesterday, as the time approached when I used to start for Mayerhof Street.... And when Peter brought in those roses a moment ago — for Lolo, of course — why, then it seemed pretty plain to me that I had become a widower for the second time in my life. Yes, my dear fellow. And this time forever. Now comes the loneliness. It has come already.

PRINCE
But that's nonsense — loneliness!

COUNT
Pardon me, but you can't understand. Your way of living has been so different from mine. You have not let yourself be dragged into anything new since your poor wife died ten years ago. Into nothing of a serious nature, I mean. And besides, you have a profession, in a sense.

PRINCE
Have I?

COUNT
Well, as a member of the Upper House.

PRINCE
Oh, I see.

COUNT
And twice you have almost been put into the cabinet.

PRINCE
Yes, almost....

COUNT
Who knows? Perhaps you will break in some time. And I'm all done. Had myself retired three years ago in the bargain — like a fool.

PRINCE (*with a smile*)
That's why you are a free man now. Perfectly free. With the world open before you.

COUNT
And no desire to do a thing, old man. That's the whole story. Since that time I haven't gone to the Casino even. Do you know what I have been doing the last few nights? I have sat under that tree with Mizzie — playing domino.

PRINCE
Well, don't you see? That's not to be lonely. When you have a daughter, and particularly such a sensible one, with whom you have always got on so well.... What does she say about your staying at home nights anyhow?

COUNT
Nothing. Besides, it has happened before, quite frequently. She says nothing at all. And what could she say? It seems to me she has never noticed anything. Do you think she can have known about Lolo?

PRINCE (*laughing*)
Man alive!

COUNT
Of course. Yes, I know. Of course, she must have known. But then, I was still almost a young man when her mother died. I hope it hasn't hurt her feelings.

PRINCE
No, *that* wouldn't. (*Casually*) But being left so much alone may have troubled her at times, I should think.

COUNT
Has she complained of me? There's no reason why you shouldn't tell me.

PRINCE
I am not in her confidence. She has never complained to me. And, heavens, it may never have troubled her at all. She has so long been accustomed to this quiet, retired life.

COUNT
Yes, and she seems to have a taste for it, too. And then she used to go out a good deal until a few years ago. Between you and me, Egon, as late as three years ago — no, two years ago — I still thought she might make the plunge after all.

PRINCE
What plunge? Oh, I see....

COUNT
If you could only guess what kind of men have been paying attention to her quite recently....

PRINCE
That's only natural.

COUNT
But she won't. She absolutely won't. What I mean is, that she can't be feeling so very lonely... otherwise she would... as she has had plenty of opportunity....

PRINCE
Certainly. It's her own choice. And then Mizzie has an additional resource in her painting. It's a case like that of my blessed aunt, the late Fanny Hohenstein, who went on writing books to a venerable old age and never wanted to hear a word about marriage.

COUNT
It may have some connection with her artistic aspirations. At times I'm inclined to look for some psychological connection between all these morbid tendencies.

PRINCE
Morbid, you say? But you can't possibly call Mizzie morbid.

COUNT
Oh, it's all over now. But there was a time....

PRINCE
I have always found Mizzie very sensible and very well balanced. After all, painting roses and violets doesn't prove a person morbid by any means.

COUNT
You don't think me such a fool that her violets and roses could make me believe.... But if you remember when she was still a young girl....

PRINCE
What then?

COUNT
Oh, that story at the time Fedor Wangenheim wanted to marry her.

PRINCE
O Lord, are you still thinking of that? Besides, there was no truth in it. And that was eighteen or twenty years ago almost.

COUNT
Her wanting to join the Ursuline Sisters rather than marry that nice young fellow, to whom she was as good as engaged already — and then up and away from home all at once — you might call that morbid, don't you think?

PRINCE
What has put you in mind of that ancient story to-day?

COUNT
Ancient, you say? I feel as if it happened last year only. It was at the very time when my own affair with Lolo had just begun. Ah, harking back like that...! And if anybody had foretold me at the time...! You know, it really began like any ordinary adventure. In the same reckless, crazy way. Yes, crazy — that's it. Not that I want to make myself out worse than I am, but it was lucky for all of us that my poor wife had already been dead a couple of years. Lolo seemed... my fate. Mistress and wife at the same time. Because she's such a wonderful cook, you know. And the way she makes you comfortable. And always in good humor — never a cross word.... Well, it's all over. Don't let us talk of it.... (*Pause*) Tell me, won't you stay for lunch? And I must call Mizzie.

PRINCE (*checking him*)
Wait — I have something to tell you. (*Casually, almost facetiously*) I want you to be prepared.

COUNT
Why? For what?

PRINCE
There is a young man coming here to be introduced.

COUNT (*astonished*)
What? A young man?

PRINCE
If you have no objection.

COUNT
Why should I object? But who is he?

PRINCE
Dear Arpad — he's my son.

COUNT (*greatly surprised*)
What?

PRINCE
Yes, my son. You see, I didn't want — as I'm going away....

COUNT
Your son? You've got a son?

PRINCE
I have.

COUNT
Well, did you ever...! You have got a young man who is your son — or rather, you have got a son who is a young man. How old?

PRINCE
Seventeen.

COUNT
Seventeen! And you haven't told me before! No, Egon... Egon! And tell me... seventeen...? My dear chap, then your wife was still alive....

PRINCE
Yes, my wife was still alive at the time. You see, Arpad, one gets mixed up in all sorts of strange affairs.

COUNT
'Pon my soul, so it seems!

PRINCE
And thus, one fine day, you find yourself having a son of seventeen with whom you go traveling.

COUNT
So it's with him you are going away?

PRINCE
I am taking that liberty.

COUNT
No, I couldn't possibly tell you.... Why, he has got a son of seventeen!... (*Suddenly he grasps the hand of the Prince, and then puts his arms about him*) And if I may ask... the mother of that young gentleman, your son...

how it happens... as you have started telling me....

PRINCE
She's dead long ago. Died a couple of weeks after he was born. A mere slip of a girl.

COUNT
Of the common people?

PRINCE
Oh, of course. But a charming creature. I may as well tell you everything about it. That is, as far as I can recall it myself. The whole story seems like a dream. And if it were not for the boy....

COUNT
And all that you tell me only now! To-day only — just before the boy is coming here!

PRINCE
You never can tell how a thing like that may be received.

COUNT
Tut, tut! Received, you say...? Did you believe perhaps... I'm something of a philosopher myself, after all.... And you call yourself a friend of mine!

PRINCE
Not a soul has known it — not a single soul in the whole world.

COUNT
But you might have told me. Really, I don't see how you could.... Come now, it wasn't quite nice.

PRINCE
I wanted to wait and see how the boy developed. You never can tell....

COUNT
Of course, with a mixed pedigree like that.... But you seem reassured now?

PRINCE
Oh, yes, he's a fine fellow.

COUNT (*embracing him again*)
And where has he been living until now?

PRINCE
His earliest years were spent a good way from Vienna — in the Tirol.

COUNT
With peasants?

PRINCE
No, with a small landowner. Then he went to school for some time at Innsbruck. And during the last few

years I have been sending him to the preparatory school at Krems.

COUNT
And you have seen him frequently?

PRINCE
Of course.

COUNT
And what's *his* idea of it anyhow?

PRINCE
Up to a few days ago he thought that he had lost both his parents — his father as well — and that I was a friend of his dead father.

MIZZIE (*appearing on the balcony*)
Good morning, Prince Egon.

PRINCE
Good morning, Mizzie.

COUNT
Well, won't you come down a while?

MIZZIE
Oh, if I am not in the way.... (*She disappears*)

COUNT
And what are we going to say to Mizzie?

PRINCE
I prefer to leave that to you, of course. But as I am adopting the boy anyhow, and as a special decree by His Majesty will probably enable him to assume my name in a few days...

COUNT (*surprised*)
What?

PRINCE
... I think it would be wiser to tell Mizzie the truth at once.

COUNT
Certainly, certainly — and why shouldn't we? Seeing that you are adopting him.... It's really funny — but, you see, a daughter, even when she gets to be an old maid, is nothing but a little girl to her father.

MIZZIE (*appears; she is thirty-seven, but still very attractive; wears a Florentine straw hat and a white dress; she gives the Count a kiss before holding out her hand to the Prince*) Well, how do you do, Prince Egon? We don't see much of you these days.

PRINCE
Thank you. — Have you been very industrious?

MIZZIE
Painting a few flowers.

COUNT
Why so modest, Mizzie? (*To the Prince*) Professor Windhofer told her recently that she could safely exhibit. Won't have to fear comparison with Mrs. Wisinger-Florian herself.

MIZZIE
That's so, perhaps. But I have no ambition of that kind.

PRINCE
I'm rather against exhibiting, too. It puts you at the mercy of any newspaper scribbler.

MIZZIE
Well, how about the members of the Upper House — at least when they make speeches?

COUNT
And how about all of us? Is there anything into which they don't poke their noses?

PRINCE
Yes, thanks to prevailing tendencies, there are people who would blackguard your pictures merely because you happen to be a countess, Mizzie.

COUNT
Yes, you're right indeed.

VALET (*entering*)
Your Grace is wanted on the telephone.

COUNT
Who is it? What is it about?

VALET
There is somebody who wishes to speak to Your Grace personally.

COUNT
You'll have to excuse me a moment. (*To the Prince, in a lowered voice*) Tell her now — while I am away. I prefer it. (*He goes out followed by the valet*)

MIZZIE
Somebody on the telephone — do you think papa can have fallen into new bondage already? (*She seats herself*)

PRINCE

Into *new* bondage, you say?

MIZZIE
Lolo used always to telephone about this time. But it's all over with her now. You know it, don't you?

PRINCE
I just heard it.

MIZZIE
And what do you think of it, Prince Egon. I am rather sorry, to tell the truth. If he tries anything new now, I'm sure he'll burn his fingers. And I do fear there is something in the air. You see, he's still too young for his years.

PRINCE
Yes, that's so.

MIZZIE (*turning so that she faces the Prince*)
And by the way, you haven't been here for ever so long.

PRINCE
You haven't missed me very much... I fear.... Your art... and heaven knows what else....

MIZZIE (*without affectation*)
Nevertheless....

PRINCE
Awfully kind of you.... (*Pause*)

MIZZIE
What makes you speechless to-day? Tell me something. Isn't there anything new in the world at all?

PRINCE (*as if he had thought of it only that moment*)
Our son has just passed his examinations for the university.

MIZZIE (*slightly perturbed*)

I hope you have more interesting news to relate.

PRINCE
More interesting....

MIZZIE
Or news, at least, that concerns me more closely than the career of a strange young man.

PRINCE
I have felt obliged, however, to keep you informed about the more important stages in the career of this young man. When he was about to be confirmed, I took the liberty to report the fact to you. But, of course, we don't have to talk any more about it.

MIZZIE
He pulled through, I hope?

PRINCE
With honors.

MIZZIE
The stock seems to be improving.

PRINCE
Let us hope so.

MIZZIE
And now the great moment is approaching, I suppose.

PRINCE
What moment?

MIZZIE
Have you forgotten already? As soon as he had passed his examinations, you meant to reveal yourself as his father.

PRINCE
So I have done already.

MIZZIE
You — have told him already?

PRINCE
I have.

MIZZIE (*after a pause, without looking at him*)
And his mother — is dead...?

PRINCE
She is — so far.

MIZZIE
And forever. (*Rising*)

PRINCE
As you please.
[*The Count enters, followed by the valet.*

VALET
But it was Your Grace who said that Joseph could be free.

COUNT

Yes, yes, it's all right.

VALET (*goes out*)

MIZZIE
What's the matter, papa?

COUNT
Nothing, my girl, nothing. I wanted to get somewhere quick — and that infernal Joseph.... If you don't mind, Mizzie, I want to have a few words with Egon.... (*To the Prince*) Do you know, she has been trying to get me before. I mean Lolo. But she couldn't get the number. And now Laura telephones — oh, well, that's her maid, you know — that she has just started on her way here.

PRINCE
Here? To see you?

COUNT
Yes.

PRINCE
But why?

COUNT
Oh, I think I can guess. You see, she has never put her foot in this place, of course, and I have been promising her all the time that she could come here once to have a look at the house and the park before she married. Her standing grievance has always been that I couldn't receive her here. On account of Mizzie, you know. Which she has understood perfectly well. And to sneak her in here some time when Mizzie was not at home — well, for that kind of thing I have never had any taste. And so she sends me a telephone message, that the marriage is set for the day after to-morrow, and that she is on her way here now.

PRINCE
Well, what of it? She is not coming here as your mistress, and so I can't see that you have any reason for embarrassment.

COUNT
But to-day of all days — and with your son due at any moment.

PRINCE
You can leave him to me.

COUNT
But I don't want it. I'm going to meet the carriage and see if I can stop her. It makes me nervous. You'll have to ask your son to excuse me for a little while. Good-by, Mizzie. I'll be back right away. (*He goes out*)

PRINCE
Miss Lolo has sent word that she's coming to call, and your papa doesn't like it.

MIZZIE
What’s that? Has Lolo sent word? Is she coming here?

PRINCE
Your father has been promising her a chance to look over the place before she was married. And now he has gone to meet the carriage in order to steer her off.

MIZZIE
How childish! And how pathetic, when you come to think of it! I should really like to make her acquaintance. Don’t you think it’s too silly? There is my father, spending half his lifetime with a person who is probably very attractive — and I don’t get a chance — don’t have the right — to shake hands with her even. Why does he object to it anyhow? He ought to understand that I know all about it.

PRINCE
Oh, heavens, that’s the way he is made. And perhaps he might not have minded so much, if he were not expecting another visit at this very moment....

MIZZIE
Another visit, you say?

PRINCE
For which I took the liberty to prepare him.

MIZZIE
Who is it?

PRINCE
Our son.

MIZZIE
Are you... bringing your son here?

PRINCE
He’ll be here in half an hour at the most.

MIZZIE
I say, Prince... this is not a joke you’re trying to spring on me?

PRINCE
By no means. On a departed... what an idea!

MIZZIE
Is it really true? He’s coming here?

PRINCE
Yes.

MIZZIE
Apparently you still think that nothing but a whim keeps me from having anything to do with the boy?

PRINCE
A whim...? No. Seeing how consistent you have been in this matter, it would hardly be safe for me to call it that. And when I bear in mind how you have had the strength all these years not even to ask any questions about him....

MIZZIE
There has been nothing admirable about that. I have had the strength to do what was worse... when I had to let him be taken away... a week after he was born....

PRINCE
Yes, what else could you — could we have done at the time? The arrangements made by me at the time, and approved by you in the end, represented absolutely the most expedient thing we could do under the circumstances.

MIZZIE
I have never questioned their expediency.

PRINCE
It was more than expedient, Mizzie. More than our own fate was at stake. Others might have come to grief if the truth had been revealed at the time. My wife, with her weak heart, had probably never survived.

MIZZIE
Oh, that weak heart....

PRINCE
And your father, Mizzie.... Think of your father!

MIZZIE
You may be sure he would have accepted the inevitable. That was the very time when he began his affair with Lolo. Otherwise everything might not have come off so smoothly. Otherwise he might have been more concerned about me. I could never have stayed away several months if he hadn't found it very convenient at that particular moment. And there was only one danger connected with the whole story — that you might be shot dead by Fedor Wangenheim, my dear Prince.

PRINCE
Why I by him? It might have taken another turn. You are not a believer in judgment by ordeal, are you? And the outcome might have proved questionable from such a point of view even. You see, we poor mortals can never be sure how things of that kind are regarded up above.

MIZZIE
You would never talk like that in the Upper House — supposing you ever opened your mouth during one of its sessions.

PRINCE
Possibly not. But the fundamental thing remains, that no amount of honesty or daring could have availed in the least at the time. It would have been nothing but useless cruelty toward those nearest to us. It's doubtful whether a dispensation could have been obtained — and besides, the Princess would never have agreed to a divorce — which you know as well as I do.

MIZZIE
Just as if I had cared in the least for the ceremony...!

PRINCE
Oh....

MIZZIE
Not in the least. Is that new to you? Didn't I tell you so at the time? Oh, you'll never guess what might... (*her words emphasized by her glance*) what I... of what I might have been capable at that time. I would have followed you anywhere — everywhere — even as your mistress. I and the child. To Switzerland, to America. After all, we could have lived wherever it happened to suit us. And perhaps, if you had gone away, they might never even have noticed your absence in the Upper House.

PRINCE
Yes, of course, we might have run away and settled down somewhere abroad.... But do you still believe that a situation like that would have proved agreeable in the long run, or even bearable?

MIZZIE
No, I don't nowadays. Because, you see, I know you now. But at that time I was in love with you. And it is possible that I — might have gone on loving you for a long time, had you not proved too *cowardly* to assume the responsibility for what had happened.... Yes, too much of a coward, Prince Egon.

PRINCE
Whether that be the proper word....

MIZZIE
Well, I don't know of any other. There was no hesitation on my part. I was ready to face everything — with joy and pride. I was ready to be a mother, and to confess myself the mother of our child. And you knew it, Egon. I told you so seventeen years ago, in that little house in the woods where you kept me hidden. But half-measures have never appealed to me. I wanted to be a mother in every respect or not at all. The day I had to let the boy be taken away from me, I made up my mind never more to trouble myself about him. And for that reason I find it ridiculous of you to bring him here all of a sudden. If you'll allow me to give you a piece of good advice, you'll go and meet him, as papa has gone to meet Lolo — and take him back home again.

PRINCE
I wouldn't dream of doing so. After what I have just had to hear from you again, it seems settled that his mother must remain dead. And that means that I must take still better care of him. He is my son in the eyes of the world too. I have adopted him.

MIZZIE

Have you...?

PRINCE
To-morrow he will probably be able to assume my name. I shall introduce him wherever it suits me. And of course, first of all to my old friend — your father. If you should find the sight of him disagreeable, there will be nothing left for you but to stay in your room while he is here.

MIZZIE
If you believe that I think your tone very appropriate....

PRINCE
Oh, just as appropriate as your bad temper.

MIZZIE
My bad temper...? Do I look it? Really, if you please... I have simply permitted myself to find this fancy of yours in rather poor taste. Otherwise my temper is just as good as ever.

PRINCE
I have no doubt of your good humor under ordinary circumstances.... I am perfectly aware, for that matter, that you have managed to become reconciled to your fate. I, too, have managed to submit to a fate which, in its own way, has been no less painful than yours.

MIZZIE
In what way? To what fate have you had to submit...? Everybody can't become a cabinet minister. Oh, I see... that remark must refer to the fact that His Highness did me the honor ten years ago, after the blissful departure of his noble spouse, to apply for my hand.

PRINCE
And again seven years ago, if you'll be kind enough to remember.

MIZZIE
Oh, yes, I do remember. Nor have I ever given you any cause to question my good memory.

PRINCE
And I hope you have never ascribed my proposals to anything like a desire to expiate some kind of guilt. I asked you to become my wife simply because of my conviction that true happiness was to be found only by your side.

MIZZIE
True happiness!... Oh, what a mistake!

PRINCE
Yes, I do believe that it was a mistake at that moment. Ten years ago it was probably still too early. And so it was, perhaps, seven years ago. But not to-day.

MIZZIE
Yes, to-day too, my dear Prince. Your fate has been never to know me, never to understand me at all — no

more when I loved you than when I hated you, and not even during the long time when I have been completely indifferent toward you.

PRINCE
I have always known you, Mizzie. I know more about you than you seem able to guess. Thus, for instance, I am not unfamiliar with the fact that you have spent the last seventeen years in more profitable pursuits than weeping over a man who, in all likelihood, was not worthy of you at the time in question. I am even aware that you have chosen to expose yourself to several disillusionments subsequent to the one suffered at my hands.

MIZZIE
Disillusionments, you say? Well, for your consolation, my dear Prince, I can assure you that some of them proved very enjoyable.

PRINCE
I know that, too. Otherwise I should hardly have dared to call myself familiar with the history of your life.

MIZZIE
And do you think that I am not familiar with yours? Do you want me to present you with a list of your mistresses? From the wife of the Bulgarian attaché in 1887 down to Mademoiselle Therese Grédun — if that be her real name — who retained the honors of her office up to last Spring at least. It seems likely that I know more than you even, for I can give you a practically complete list of those with whom she has deceived you.

PRINCE
Oh, don't, if you please. There is no real pleasure in knowledge of that kind when you don't uncover it yourself.
[*A carriage is heard stopping in front of the house.*

PRINCE
That's he. Do you want to disappear before he comes out here? I can detain him that long.

MIZZIE
Don't trouble yourself, please. I prefer to stay. But don't imagine that there is anything astir within me.... This is nothing but a young man coming to call on my father. There he is now.... As to blood being thicker than water — I think it's nothing but a fairy tale. I can't feel anything at all, my dear Prince.

PHILIP (*comes quickly through the main entrance; he is seventeen, slender, handsome, elegant, but not foppish; shows a charming, though somewhat boyish, forwardness, not quite free from embarrassment*) Good morning. (*He bows to Mizzie*)

PRINCE
Good morning, Philip. — Countess, will you permit me to introduce my son? This is Countess Mizzie, daughter of the old friend of mine in whose house you are now.

PHILIP (*kisses the hand offered him by Mizzie; brief pause*)

MIZZIE
Won't you be seated, please?

PHILIP
Thank you. Countess. (*All remain standing*)

PRINCE
You came in the carriage? Might just as well send it back, as mine is here already.

PHILIP
Won't you come back with me instead, papa? You see, I think Wasner does a great deal better than your Franz with his team of ancients.

MIZZIE
So Wasner has been driving you?

PHILIP
Yes.

MIZZIE
The old man himself? Do you know that's a great honor? Wasner won't take the box for everybody. Up to about two years ago he used to drive my father.

PHILIP
Oh....

PRINCE
You're a little late, by the way, Philip.

PHILIP
Yes, I have to beg your pardon. Overslept, you know. (*To Mizzie*) I was out with some of my colleagues last night. You may have heard that I passed my examinations a couple of weeks ago, Countess. That's why we rather made a night of it.

MIZZIE
You seem to have caught on to our Viennese ways pretty quickly, Mister....

PRINCE
Oh, dear Mizzie, call him Philip, please.

MIZZIE
But I think we must sit down first of all, Philip. (*With a glance at the Prince*) Papa should be here any moment now. (*She and the Prince sit down*)

PHILIP (*still standing*)
If you permit me to say so — I think the park is magnificent. It is much finer than ours.

MIZZIE
You are familiar with the Ravenstein park?

PHILIP
Certainly, Countess. I have been living at Ravenstein House three days already.

MIZZIE
Is that so?

PRINCE
Of course, gardens cannot do as well in the city as out here. Ours was probably a great deal more beautiful a hundred years ago. But then our place was still practically outside the city.

PHILIP
It's a pity that all sorts of people have been allowed to run up houses around our place like that.

MIZZIE
We are better off in that respect. And we shall hardly live to see the town overtake us.

PHILIP (*affably*)
But why not, Countess?

MIZZIE
A hundred years ago these grounds were still used for hunting. The place adjoins the Tiergarten, you know. Look over that wall there, Philip. And our villa was a hunting lodge once, belonging to the Empress Maria Theresa. The stone figure over there goes back to that period.

PHILIP
And how old is our place, papa?

PRINCE (*smiling*)
Our place, sonny, dates back to the seventeenth century. Didn't I show you the room in which Emperor Leopold spent a night?

PHILIP
Emperor Leopold, 1648 to 1705.

MIZZIE (*laughs*)

PHILIP
Oh, that's an echo of the examinations. When I get old enough.... (*He interrupts himself*) I beg your pardon! What I meant to say was simply — all that stuff will be out of my head in a year. And, of course, when I learned those dates, I didn't know Emperor Leopold had been such a good friend of my own people.

MIZZIE
You seem to think your discovery enormously funny, Philip?

PHILIP
Discovery, you say.... Well, frankly speaking, it could hardly be called that. (*He looks at the Prince*)

PRINCE
Go on, go on!

PHILIP
Well, you see, Countess, I have always had the feeling that I was no Philip Radeiner by birth.

MIZZIE
Radeiner? (*To the Prince*) Oh, that was the name...?

PRINCE
Yes.

PHILIP
And, of course, it was very pleasant to find my suspicions confirmed — but I have really known it all the time. I can put two and two together. And some of the other boys had also figured out — that I.... Really, Countess, that story about Prince Ravenstein coming to Krems merely to see how the son of his late friend was getting along — don't you think it smacked a little too much of story book... Home and Family Library, and that sort of thing? All the clever ones felt pretty sure that I was of noble blood, and as I was one of the cleverest....

MIZZIE
So it seems.... And what are your plans for the future, Philip?

PHILIP
Next October I shall begin my year as volunteer with the Sixth Dragoons, which is the regiment in which we Ravensteins always serve. And what's going to happen after that — whether I stay in the army or become an archbishop — in due time, of course....

MIZZIE
That would probably be the best thing. The Ravensteins have always been strong in the faith.

PHILIP
Yes, it's mentioned in the Universal History even. They were Catholic at first; then they turned Protestant in the Thirty Years War; and finally they became Catholic again — but they always remained strong in their faith. It was only the faith that changed.

PRINCE
Philip, Philip!

MIZZIE
That's the spirit of the time, Prince Egon.

PRINCE
And an inheritance from his mother.

MIZZIE
You have been working hard, your father tells me, and have passed your examinations with honors.

PHILIP
Well, that wasn't difficult, Countess. I seem to get hold of things quickly. That's probably another result of the common blood in me. And I had time to spare for things not in the school curriculum — such as horseback riding and...

MIZZIE
And what?

PHILIP
Playing the clarinet.

MIZZIE (*laughing*)
Why did you hesitate to tell about that?

PHILIP
Because.... Well, because everybody laughs when I say that I play the clarinet. And so did you, too, Countess. Isn't that queer? Did anybody ever laugh because you told him that you were painting for a diversion?

MIZZIE
So you have already heard about that?

PHILIP
Yes, indeed, Countess — papa told me. And besides, there is a floral piece in my bedroom — a Chinese vase, you know, with a laburnum branch and something purplish in color.

MIZZIE
That purplish stuff must be lilacs.

PHILIP
Oh, lilacs, of course. I saw that at once. But I couldn't recall the name just now.

VALET (*entering*)
There is a lady who wishes to see the Count. I have showed her into the drawing-room.

MIZZIE
A lady...? You'll have to excuse me for a moment, gentlemen. (*She goes out*)

PHILIP
That's all right, papa — if it's up to me, I have no objection.

PRINCE
To what? Of what are you talking?

PHILIP

I have no objection to your choice.

PRINCE
Have you lost your senses, boy?

PHILIP
But really, papa, do you think you can hide anything from me? That common blood in me, you know....

PRINCE
What put such an idea into your head?

PHILIP
Now look here, papa! You have been telling me how anxious you were to introduce me to your old friend, the Count. And then the Count has a daughter — which I have known all the time, by the way.... The one thing I feared a little was that she might be too young.

PRINCE (*offended, and yet unable to keep serious*)
Too young, you say....

PHILIP
It was perfectly plain that you had a certain weakness for that daughter.... Why, you used to be quite embarrassed when talking of her. And then you have been telling me all sorts of things about her that you would never have cared to tell otherwise. What interest could I have in the pictures of a Countess X-divided-by-anything, for instance — supposing even that you *could* tell her lilacs from her laburnums by their color? And, as I said, my one fear was that she might be too young — as my mother, that is, and not as your wife. Of course, there is not yet anybody too young or beautiful for you. But now I can tell you, papa, that she suits me absolutely as she is.

PRINCE
Well, if you are not the most impudent rogue I ever came across...! Do you really think I would ask you, if I should ever....

PHILIP
Not exactly ask, papa... but a happy family life requires that all the members affect each other sympathetically... don't you think so?
[*Mizzie and Lolo Langhuber enter.*

MIZZIE
You must look around, please. I am sure my father would be very sorry to miss you. (*She starts to make the usual introductions*) Permit me to....

LOLO
Oh, Your Highness.

PRINCE
Well, Miss Pallestri....

LOLO
Langhuber, if you please. I have come to thank the Count for the magnificent flowers he sent me at my farewell performance.

PRINCE (*introducing*)
My son Philip. And this is Miss...

LOLO
Charlotta Langhuber.

PRINCE (*to Philip*)
Better known as Miss Pallestri.

PHILIP
Oh, Miss Pallestri! Then I have already had the pleasure....

PRINCE
What?

PHILIP
You see, I have Miss Pallestri in my collection.

PRINCE
What... what sort of collection is that?

LOLO
There must be some kind of mistake here, Your Highness. I can not recall....

PHILIP
Of course, you can't, for I don't suppose you could feel that I was cutting out your picture from a newspaper at Krems?

LOLO
No, thank heaven!

PHILIP
It was one of our amusements at school, you know. There was one who cut out all the crimes and disasters he could get hold of.

LOLO
What a dreadful fellow that must have been!

PHILIP
And there was one who went in for historical personalities, like North Pole explorers and composers and that kind of people. And I used to collect theatrical ladies. Ever so much more pleasant to look at, you know. I have got two hundred and thirteen — which I'll show you sometime, papa. Quite interesting, you know. With a musical comedy star from Australia among the rest.

LOLO
I didn't know Your Highness had a son — and such a big one at that.

PHILIP
Yes, I have been hiding my light under a bushel so far.

PRINCE
And now you are trying to make up for it, I should say.

LOLO
Oh, please let him, Your Highness. I prefer young people like him to be a little *vif*.

PHILIP
So you are going to retire to private life, Miss Pallestri? That's too bad. Just when I might have the pleasure at last of seeing you on those boards that signify the world....

LOLO
That's awfully kind of Your Highness, but unfortunately one hasn't time to wait for the youth that's still growing. And the more mature ones are beginning to find my vintage a little out of date, I fear.

PRINCE
They say that you are about to be married.

LOLO
Yes, I am about to enter the holy state of matrimony.

PHILIP
And who is the happy man, if I may ask?

LOLO
Who is he? Why, he is waiting outside now — with that carriage.

MIZZIE
Why — a coachman?

LOLO
But, Countess — a coachman, you say?! Only in the same manner as when your papa himself — beg your pardon! — happens to be taking the bay out for a spin at times. Cab owner, that's what my fiancé is — and house owner, and a burgess of Vienna, who gets on the box himself only when it pleases him and when there is somebody of whom he thinks a whole lot. Now he is driving for a certain Baron Radeiner — whom he has just brought out here to see your father, Countess. And I am having my doubts about that Baron Radeiner.

PHILIP
Permit me to introduce myself — Baron Radeiner.

LOLO
So that's you, Your Highness?

PHILIP
I have let nobody but Wasner drive me since I came here.

LOLO
And under an assumed name at that, Your Highness? Well, we are finding out a lot of nice things about you!

COUNT (*appears, very hot*)
Well, here I am. (*Taking in the situation*) Ah!

LOLO
Your humble servant, Count! I have taken the liberty — I wanted to thank you for the magnificent flowers.

COUNT
Oh, please — it was a great pleasure....

PRINCE
And here, old friend, is my son Philip.

PHILIP
I regard myself as greatly honored, Count.

COUNT (*giving his hand to Philip*)

I bid you welcome to my house. Please consider yourself at home here. — I don't think any further introductions are required.

MIZZIE
No, papa.

COUNT (*slightly embarrassed*)
It's very charming of you, my dear lady. Of course, you know better than anybody that I have always been one of your admirers.... But tell me, please, how in the world did you get out here? I have just been taking a walk along the main road, where every carriage has to pass, and I didn't see you.

LOLO
What do you take me for, Count? My cab days are past now. I came by the train, which is the proper thing for me.

COUNT
I see.... But I hear that your fiancé himself....

LOLO
Oh, he has more pretentious customers to look after.

PHILIP
Yes, I have just had the pleasure of being conducted here by the fiancé of Miss Pallestri.

COUNT

Is Wasner driving for you? Well, that settles it — of course — clear psychological connection! (*Offers his cigar case*) Want a smoke?

PHILIP (*accepting*)
Thank you.

PRINCE
But, Philip...! A monster like that before lunch!

COUNT
Excellent. Nothing better for the health. And I like you. Suppose we sit down.
[*The Count, the Prince and Philip seat themselves, while Mizzie and Lolo remain standing close to them.*

COUNT
So you'll be off with your father to-morrow?

PHILIP
Yes, Count. And I'm tremendously pleased to think of it.

COUNT
Will you be gone long?

PRINCE
That depends on several circumstances.

PHILIP
I have to report myself at the regiment on the first of October.

PRINCE
And it's possible that I may go farther south after that.

COUNT
Well, that's news. Where?

PRINCE (*with a glance at Mizzie*)
Egypt, and the Sudan maybe — for a little hunting.

MIZZIE (*to Lolo*)
Let me show you the park.

LOLO
It's a marvel. Ours isn't a patch on it, of course. (*She and Mizzie come forward*)

MIZZIE
Have you a garden at your place, too?

LOLO
Certainly. As well as an ancestral palace — at Ottakring. The great-grandfather of Wasner was in the cab

business in his days already. — My, but that's beautiful! The way those flowers are hanging down. I must have something just like it.

COUNT (*disturbed*)
Why are the ladies leaving us?

MIZZIE
Never mind, papa, I'm merely explaining the architecture of our façade.

PHILIP
Do you often get visits of theatrical ladies, Count?

COUNT
No, this is merely an accident.
[*The men stroll off toward those parts of the garden that are not visible.*

MIZZIE
It seems strange that I have never before had a chance of meeting you. I am very glad to see you.

LOLO (*with a grateful glance*)
And so I am. Of course, I have known you by sight these many years. Often and often have I looked up at your box.

MIZZIE
But not at me.

LOLO
Oh, that's all over now.

MIZZIE
Do you know, I really feel a little offended — on *his* behalf.

LOLO
Offended, you say...?

MIZZIE
It will be a hard blow for him. Nobody knows better than I how deeply he has been attached to you. Although he has never said a word to me about it.

LOLO
Do you think it's so very easy for me either, Countess? But tell me. Countess, what else could I do? I am no longer a spring chicken, you know. And one can't help hankering for something more settled. As long as I had a profession of my own, I could allow myself — what do they call it now? — to entertain liberal ideas. It goes in a way with the position I have held. But how would that look now, when I am retiring to private life?

MIZZIE
Oh, I can see that perfectly. But what is *he* going to do now?

LOLO
Why shouldn't he marry, too? I assure you, Countess, that there are many who would give all their five fingers.... Don't you realize, Countess, that I, too, have found it a hard step to take?

MIZZIE
Do you know what I have been wondering often? Whether he never thought of making *you* his wife?

LOLO
Oh, yes, that's just what he wanted.

MIZZIE
Why...?!

LOLO
Do you know when he asked me the last time, Countess? Less than a month ago.

MIZZIE
And you said no?

LOLO
I did. It would have done no good. Me a Countess! Can you imagine it? I being your stepmother, Countess...! Then we could not have been chatting nicely as we are doing now.

MIZZIE
If you only knew how sympathetically you affect me....

LOLO
But I don't want to appear better than I am. And who knows what I might....

MIZZIE
What might you?

LOLO
Well, this is the truth of it. I have gone clear off my head about Wasner. Which I hope won't make you think the worse of me. In all these eighteen years I have had nothing to blame myself with, as far as your dear papa is concerned. But you can't wonder if my feelings began to cool off a little as the years passed along. And rather than to make your dear papa — oh, no, no, Countess... I owe him too much gratitude for that.... Lord!

MIZZIE
What is it?

LOLO
There he is now, looking right at me.

MIZZIE (*looks in the direction indicated*)

WASNER (*who has appeared at the entrance, raises his tall hat in salute*)

LOLO
Don’t you think me an awful fool, Countess? Every time I catch sight of him suddenly, my heart starts beating like everything. Yes, there’s no fool like an old one.

MIZZIE
Old...? Do you call yourself old? Why, there can’t be much difference between us.

LOLO
Oh, mercy.... (*With a glance at Mizzie*)

MIZZIE
I am thirty-seven. — No, don’t look at me with any pity. There is no cause for that. None whatever.

LOLO (*apparently relieved*)

I have heard some whispers. Countess — of course, I didn’t believe anything. But I thank heaven it was true. (*They shake hands*)

MIZZIE
I should like to congratulate your fiancé right now, if you’ll permit me.

LOLO
That’s too sweet of you — but what about the Count — perhaps he wouldn’t like...?

MIZZIE
My dear, I have always been accustomed to do as I pleased. (*They go together toward the entrance*)

WASNER
You’re too kind, Countess....
[*The Count, the Prince and Philip have reappeared in the meantime.*

COUNT
Look at that, will you!

WASNER
Good morning, Count. Good morning, Highness.

PRINCE
I say, Wasner, you may just as well take your bride home in that trap of yours. My son is coming with me.

WASNER
Your son...?

PHILIP
Why haven’t you told me that you were engaged, Wasner?

WASNER
Well, there are things you haven’t told either... Mr. von Radeiner!

COUNT (*to Lolo*)
Thank you very much for your friendly visit, and please accept my very best wishes.

LOLO
The same to you, Count. And I must say, that when one has such a daughter....

MIZZIE
It's too bad I haven't come to know you before.

LOLO
Oh, really, Countess....

MIZZIE
Once more, my dear Miss Lolo, good luck to you! (*Mizzie embraces Lolo*)

COUNT (*looks on with surprise and some genuine emotion*)

LOLO
I thank you for the kind reception, Count — and good-by!

COUNT
Good-by, Miss Langhuber. I trust you'll be happy... indeed I do, Lolo.

LOLO (*gets into the carriage which has driven up to the gate in the meantime*)

WASNER (*is on the box, hat in hand; they drive off*)

MIZZIE (*waves her hand at them as they disappear*)

PHILIP (*who has been standing in the foreground with the Prince*) Oh, my dear papa, I can see through the whole story.

PRINCE
You can?

PHILIP
This Miss Lolo must be the natural daughter of the Count, and a sister of the Countess — her foster-sister, as they say.

PRINCE
No, you would call that a step-sister. But go on, Mr. Diplomat.

PHILIP
And of course, both are in love with you — both the Countess and the ballet dancer. And this marriage between the dancer and Wasner is your work.

PRINCE
Go on.

PHILIP
You know — there's something I never thought of until just now!

PRINCE
What?

PHILIP
I don't know if I dare?

PRINCE
Why so timid all at once?

PHILIP
Supposing my mother was not dead....

PRINCE
H'm....

PHILIP
And, through a remarkable combination of circumstances, she should now be going back to the city in the very carriage that brought me out here...? And suppose it should be my own mother, whose picture I cut out of that newspaper...?

PRINCE
My lad, you'll certainly end as a cabinet minister — Secretary of Agriculture, if nothing better. — But now it's time for us to say good-by.
[*The Count and Mizzie are coming forward again.*

PRINCE
Well, my dear friend, this must be our farewell call, I am sorry to say.

COUNT
But why don't you stay.... That would be delightful... if you could take lunch with us....

PRINCE
Unfortunately, it isn't possible. We have an appointment at Sacher's.

COUNT
That's really too bad. And shall I not see you at all during the Summer?

PRINCE
Oh, we shall not be entirely out of touch.

COUNT
And are you starting to-morrow already?

PRINCE

Yes.

COUNT
Where are you going?

PRINCE
To the sea shore — Ostend.

COUNT
Oh, you are bound for Ostend. I have long wanted to go there.

PRINCE
But that would be fine....

COUNT
What do you think, Mizzie? Let's be fashionable. Let's go to Ostend, too.

MIZZIE
I can't answer yet. But there's no reason why you shouldn't go, papa.

PHILIP
That would be delightful, Countess. It would please me awfully.

MIZZIE (*smiling*)
That's very kind of you, Philip. (*She holds out her hand to him*)

PHILIP (*kisses her hand*)

COUNT (*to the Prince*)
The children seem to get along beautifully.

PRINCE
Yes, that's what I have been thinking. Good-by then. Good-by, my dear Mizzie. And good-by to you, my dear old fellow. I hope at least to see *you* again at Ostend.

COUNT
Oh, she'll come along. Won't you, Mizzie? After all, you can get studios by the sea shore, too. Or how about it, Mizzie?

MIZZIE (*remains silent*)

PRINCE
Well, until we meet again! (*He shakes hands with the Count and Mizzie*)

PHILIP (*kisses the hand of Mizzie once more*)

COUNT (*giving his hand to Philip*)
It has been a great pleasure.

[*The Prince and Philip go out through the gate and step into the carriage which has been driving up in the meantime, and which now carries them off. The Count and Mizzie come forward again and seat themselves at the table under the tree. Pause.*

COUNT
Hasn't this been a queer day?

MIZZIE
All life is queer — only we forget it most of the time.

COUNT
I suppose you're right. (*Pause*)

MIZZIE
You know, papa, you might just as well have brought us together a little earlier.

COUNT
Who? Oh, you and....

MIZZIE
Me and Miss Lolo. She's a dear.

COUNT
So you like her? Well, if it were only possible to know in advance.... But what's the use? Now it's all over.

MIZZIE (*takes hold of his hand*)

COUNT (*rises and kisses her on the forehead; strolls about aimlessly for a few seconds*) Tell me, Mizzie, what you think.... How do you like the boy?

MIZZIE
Philip? Oh, rather fresh.

COUNT
Fresh, perhaps, but smart. I hope he'll stay in the army. That's a much more sensible career than the diplomatic service. Slow, but sure. All you need is to live long enough in order to become a general. But a political career.... Now look at Egon... three times he has almost become a minister.... And suppose he had succeeded? (*Walking back and forth*) Yes, yes... we shall be rather lonely this Summer.

MIZZIE
But why shouldn't you go to Ostend, papa?

COUNT
Yes, why not...? Really, won't you come along? It would be rather... without you, you know.... It's no use looking at me like that. I know! I haven't paid as much attention to you in the past as I should have....

MIZZIE (*taking his hand again*)

Oh, papa, you're not going to apologize, are you? I understand perfectly.

COUNT
Oh, well. But, you see, I shall not get much joy out of that trip without you. And what would you be doing here, all by yourself? You can't paint all day long.

MIZZIE
The only trouble is... the Prince has asked me to marry him.

COUNT
What? Is it possible? No, you don't mean.... And... and you said no?

MIZZIE
Practically.

COUNT
You did...? Oh, well.... After all, I have never tried to persuade you. It must be as you.... But I can't understand why. I have noticed for a long time, that he.... As far as age is concerned, you wouldn't be badly matched. And as for the rest... sixty millions are not to be despised exactly. But just as you say.

MIZZIE (*remains silent*)

COUNT
Or could it possibly be on account of the boy? That would be to exaggerate the matter, I assure you. Things of that kind occur in the very best families. And particularly when you consider that his heart always remained with his wife.... All of a sudden you get dragged into an affair of that kind without exactly knowing how.

MIZZIE
And some poor girl of the people is thrown aside and allowed to go to the dogs.

COUNT
Oh, please, that's only in the books. And how could he help it? That kind of women seem always to die off early. And who knows what he might have done, if she hadn't died.... I really think that his action in regard to the boy has been pretty decent. That took courage, you know. I could tell you more than one case.... But don't let us talk of it. If that should be the only thing against him, however.... And besides, our being together at Ostend wouldn't commit you in any way.

MIZZIE
No, that's true.

COUNT
Well, then... I tell you what. You make the trip with me. And if the place suits you, you can stay. If not, you can go on to London for a visit with Aunt Lora. I mean simply, that there is no sense in your letting me go away alone.

MIZZIE
All right.

COUNT
What do you mean?

MIZZIE
I'll go with you. But without any obligation — absolutely free.

COUNT
You'll come with me, you say?

MIZZIE
I will, papa.

COUNT
Oh, I'm so glad. Thank you, Mizzie.

MIZZIE
Why should you thank me? It's a pleasure to me.

COUNT
You can't imagine, of course... without you, Mizzie.... There would be so much to remember — this time in particular.... You know, of course, that I took Lolo to Normandy last year?

MIZZIE
Of course, I know....

COUNT
And as far as Egon is concerned... not that I want to persuade you by any means... but in a strange place like that you often get more acquainted with a person in a couple of days than during many years at home.

MIZZIE
It's settled now that I go with you, papa. And as for the rest, don't let us talk of it — for the time being.

COUNT
Then, you know, I'm going to telephone to the ticket office at once and reserve sleeping car compartments for the day after to-morrow — or for to-morrow.

MIZZIE
Are you in such a hurry?

COUNT
What's the use of sitting about here, once we have made up our minds? So I'll telephone.... Does that suit you?

MIZZIE
Yes.

COUNT (*puts his arms about her*)

PROFESSOR WINDHOFER (*appears at the garden gate*)

COUNT
Why, there's the professor. Have you a lesson to-day?

MIZZIE
I had forgotten it, too.

PROFESSOR (*handsome; about thirty-five; his beard is blond and trimmed to a point; he is very carefully dressed, and wears a gray overcoat; he takes off his hat as he enters the garden and comes forward*)
Good morning, Countess. How do you do, Count?

COUNT
Good morning, my dear Professor, and how are you? You have to pardon me. I was just about to go to the telephone — we are going away, you know.

PROFESSOR
Oh, are you going away? Please, don't let me detain you.

COUNT
I suppose I shall see you later, Professor. (*He goes into the house*)

PROFESSOR
So you are going away, Countess?

MIZZIE
Yes, to Ostend.

PROFESSOR
That's rather a sudden decision.

MIZZIE
Yes, rather. But that's my way.

PROFESSOR
That means an end to the lessons for the present, I suppose? Too bad.

MIZZIE
I don't think I shall be able to-day even... I am feeling a little upset.

PROFESSOR
Do you? — Well, you look rather pale, Maria.

MIZZIE
Oh, you think so?

PROFESSOR
And how long will you be gone?

MIZZIE
Until the Fall probably — perhaps until very late in the Fall even.

PROFESSOR
Then we can resume our lessons next November at the earliest, I suppose?

MIZZIE (*smiling*)

I don't think we shall....

PROFESSOR
Oh, you don't think so? (*They look hard at each other*)

MIZZIE
No, I don't.

PROFESSOR
Which means, Maria — that I am discharged.

MIZZIE
How can you put it that way, Rudolph? That is not quite fair.

PROFESSOR
Pardon me. But it really came a little more suddenly than I had expected.

MIZZIE
Better that than have it come too slow. Don't you think so?

PROFESSOR
Well, girl, I have no intention whatever to make any reproaches.

MIZZIE
Well, you have no reason. And it wouldn't be nice either. (*She holds out her hand to him*)

PROFESSOR (*takes her hand and kisses it*)
Will you please excuse me to the Count?

MIZZIE
Are you going already...?

PROFESSOR (*unconcernedly*)
Isn't that better?

MIZZIE (*after a pause, during which she looks straight into his eyes*) Yes, I think so. (*They shake hands*)

PROFESSOR
Good luck, Maria.

MIZZIE
Same to you.... And remember me to your wife and the children.

PROFESSOR
I won't forget, Countess. (*He goes out*)

MIZZIE (*remains on the same spot for a little while, following him with her eyes*)

COUNT (*on the terrace*)
Everything is ready. We'll leave at nine-thirty to-morrow night. — But what has become of the professor?

MIZZIE
I sent him away.

COUNT
Oh, you did? — And can you guess who has the compartment between yours and mine?... Egon and his young gentleman. Won't they be surprised though?

MIZZIE
Yes... won't they? (*She goes into the house*)

CURTAIN

The Vast Domain (1911)

Original German Title: 'Das weite Land'

Translated by Edward Woticky and Alexander Caro, 1923

This tragicomedy in five acts premiered on 2 November 1910 at the Novy Dramaticheskiy Theatre in Saint Petersburg. The German version was first performed a year later, simultaneously at several theaters: the Lessing Theatre (Berlin), the Lobe Theatre in Breslau, the Residenz Theatre in Munich, the German State Theatre in Prague, the Old City Theatre in Leipzig, the Schauburg Theatre in Hanover, the Bochum City Theatre, and the Burgtheater in Vienna. The text was published by S. Fischer in Berlin shortly after the German premieres.

The plot concerns a Viennese light bulb manufacturer, Friedrich Hofreiter, who repeatedly commits adultery. As the story opens, Hofreiter has ended an affair with Adele, the wife of his banker, Natter. His chief reason for ending the affair is Natter's spreading of a rumor that the world-famous Russian pianist Korsakov killed himself out of unrequited love for Hofreiter's wife, Genia. Adele Natter accuses Hofreiter of flirting outrageously with the 20-year-old Miss Erna Wahl. Meanwhile, Dr. Franz Mauer, whom Hofreiter calls his "only friend", proposes to Erna, but does not receive the acceptance he hoped for. Genia is confused why her husband unexpectedly wants to leave with friends for an extended mountain hike. Hofreiter replies that he can't bear to be with a woman whose virtue drove Korsakov to his death. Previously, Genia had shown her husband a letter from Korsakov professing her marital fidelity.

Whilst away, Hofreiter begins an affair with Erna in the Dolomites and subsequently proposes marriage. Although Erna has been in love with the factory owner since childhood, she wishes to remain single. However, due to the ensuing extra-marital complications, the drama inevitably leads to tragic consequence and thrilling duels…

When eventually asked about why they commit adultery, the husbands in the play are baffled by their actions. They cheat on their wives and are cheated on and still they persist. When asked why, the only answer they can come up with is that man is a "complicated subject" and his soul is "a vast domain" — explaining the title of the drama.

Schnitzler was inspired in writing this play by a salon he and his friends frequented at the St. Genois-Schlössl in Baden, near Vienna, which was run by Friedrich Eckstein and his wife Bertha Helene Diener. In his diary, Schnitzler cites Theodor Christomannos as the model for the hotelier and mountaineer "Dr. von Aigner" (January 31, 1911). Eckstein appears in Act III as "Gustl Wahl," with whom one discusses Buddhism.

Although the author presents Hofreiter as the villain of the play, he at least displays a sense of guilt for his crimes to his lovers. Erna wants to follow Hofreiter unconditionally, though he states that he "belongs to no one in the world... Nor does he want to." When his son Percy arrives from England, Hofreiter becomes painfully aware of what he has lost. Schnitzler carefully arranges the structure of the drama. He employs rumours, messenger reports and small and large gaps in time between the acts as his devices, prompting the viewer to reflect on the events behind the scenes. The use of indirect communication in *Das weite Land*, where little is explicitly stated, yet everything becomes clear to the viewer, even though they are occasionally

led astray, reveals the mature mastery of his playwriting at this stage of his career.



Villa Aichelburg at Baden — the true-life inspiration for the drama's setting

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CHARACTERS



FRIEDRICH HOFREITER, *MANUFACTURER*

GENIA, his *wife*

ANNA MEINHOLD-AIGNER, *an actress*

OTTO, *her son, an ensign of marines*

DOCTOR VON AIGNER, *divorced husband of Mrs. Meinhold*

MRS. WAHL

HER CHILDREN: GUSTAV & ERNA

NATTER, *a banker*

ADELE, *his wife*

DOCTOR FRANZ MAUER, *a physician*

DEMETER STANZIDES, *a lieutenant*

PAUL KREINDL

ALBERTUS RHON, *a writer*

MARIE, *his wife*

SERENITZ

DOCTOR MEYER

FIRST TOURIST

SECOND TOURIST

ROSENSTOCK, *porter in the Vols Lake Hotel*

AN ENGLISHWOMAN

A FRENCHWOMAN

A SPANISH LADY

PENN, *a guide*

Two children of MRS. NATTER

MISS, *an English governess*

CHAMBERMAID, *at Hofreiters*'

Tourists, *Hotel Guests, Waiters*, *Boys, etc.*

Place, Baden, *near Vienna; in the third act only, the Vols Lake Hotel.*

ACT I



VERANDA AND GARDEN of the Hofreiter Villa. At the right the veranda, spacious, with balustrade which continues along either side of the six steps leading into the garden. Double door, leading from the veranda to the drawing room, stands open. In front of the veranda, a lawn with roses in bloom. A rather high wooden fence, painted green, encloses the garden, curving round at the rear right corner, and running onward behind the house. Without, along the *fence, a foot-path. A high-road parallel to the foot-path. Inside the fence, shrubbery running along it. At the left the garden gate, facing the veranda, stands open. Benches stand round about the lawn: one in front facing the auditorium, another facing the gate, a third within the lawn, with its back to the auditorium. On the veranda a longish table with six armchairs. In the rear corner a potted oleander. The veranda is covered with an awning, striped red and white. On the table an electric lamp. To the right of the door a wall bracket with incandescent bulb. Tea dishes on the table. Late afternoon, after a thundershower. Meadows and leaves moist. The long shadows of the fence rails fall in the garden.*

GENIA, 31, *clad simply, but with distinction; dark-gray skirt, blouse of violet silk. She is seated at the veranda table, on the narrow side of the porch which is turned toward the spectators. She is just putting down her teacup. Staring before her a moment, she rises pushes back her chair, glances rearward over the balustrade into the garden, then goes down the steps to the garden, her hands clasped behind her, as is her habit.*

CHAMBERMAID *enters from the drawing-room carrying a large cup; about to remove the tea things, hesitates.*

GENIA *(Still on the stair, turning round toward her).* Just clear away the things. Mr. Hofreiter has most likely had his tea in town. *(After a brief pause during which she glances skyward)* And you might draw up the awning.

Chambermaid (Laying down the tray and raising the awning). May I not bring you something to put around you? It has become cool.

Genia. Yes. My white cloak. *(She smells of one of the roses on the bush, then continues strolling toward rear, along the path adjoining the house.)*

CHAMBERMAID *having raised the awning, clears the table and exits with the tea things.*

MRS. WAHL *and* ERNA *coming down the highroad from the rear, along the fence, are nearing the gate.* GEN LA, *continuing her walk along the meadow, also approaches the gate.* MRS. WAHL *and* ERNA *nod greetings from without.* GENIA *returns the greeting with a slight wave of the hand, hastens her steps somewhat, and meets the others at the entrance.* MRS. WAHL *and* ERNA, *both in dark English walking suits, remain standing.* MRS. WAHL *slender, supple, age about 45, with a certain languorous, but intensely conscious distinction. Her enunciation is slightly nasal, and she speaks an aristocratic-Viennese that is not quite genuine. Her glance and manner of speech are now too languid, now too animated. For the most part she looks past the person whom she is addressing, and only when she has finished speaking does she direct a*

friendly, *searching gate upon her auditor*, *as if to reassure herself.* ERNA *taller than her mother*, *slender*, *determined and direct to the point of thoughtlessness*, *without appearing bumptious. Steady*, *unaffected glance.*

Genia (Giving both a friendly hand-clasp). Back safe and sound from the city?

Mrs. Wahl. At you see, dear Frau Genia. The weather was frightful.

Genia. Out here too, till an hour ago.

Mrs. Wahl. You were quite right to remain at home. We were fairly swamped at the cemetery. Really it was only to please Erna that I went at all. It might have sufficed to witness the church ceremony, — in my opinion. I beg of you, to whom does one render any service by...

Erna — There mother is right... We can't bring him back to life again, poor Korsakow.

Genia. The funeral must have been a very big one.

Mrs. Wahl. Enormous. In the church one could hardly stir. And at the cemetery, too, there were several hundred — despite the wretched weather.

Genia. Many acquaintances?

Mrs. Wahl. Naturally... The Natters came cruising along in their new scarlet car.

Genia (Smiling). I've heard about the car.

Mrs. Wahl. The effect was fantastic, at the graveyard wall... not exactly fantastic, but, — well, it did look remarkable.

The Chambermaid (Enters with the white cloak, which she robes about GENIA). My humble respects, Madam. My humble respects, Miss.

Mrs. Wahl (Affably). God bleu you, Kate.

Erna. Good evening. *(CHAMBERMAID exit.)*

Genia. Didn't you speak to my husband at the cemetery?

Mrs. Wahl. Yes... in passing.

Erna. He was very much shaken.

Genia. That I can well imagine.

Erna. Truly I was rather astonished. As a rule he is not one to be easily moved.

Genia (Smiling). How remarkably well you know him.

Erna. And why not? *(Very simply.)* As a seven-year old girl I already loved him. Long before you, Madam.

Genia. “Madam” again.

Erna (Almost tenderly) — Frau Genia. *(Kisses her hand)*

Genia. As for Friedrich, he was very fond of Alexei Korsakow.

Erna. Obviously. Do you know, — I used to think that Korsakow was merely his — pianist.

Genia. How do you mean that — his pianist?

Erna — Well, just as Doctor Mauer is his best friend, Mr. Natter his banker, I his tennis partner, Lieutenant Stanzides... his duelling second.

Genia. Oh *Erna.* Should such a thing ever come up, I mean... He takes from each what he happens to find convenient, and as to what other qualities a person may have packed away he barely concerns himself.

Mrs. Wahl. Do you know, Frau Genia, what my poor husband used to call such remarks of Erna’s? Her performances on the psychologic tight-rope.

Otto Von Aigner (Approaches. At the gate he greets). Good evening.

Genia. Good evening, Herr von Aigner. Won’t you come in.

Otto. If I may. *(He enters the garden. A young man, 25, of reserved and courteous manner: in the uniform of an ensign).*

Exchange of greetings.

Genia. How is your mother? I had hoped to see her here this afternoon.

Otto. Wasn’t she to see you yesterday, Madam?

Genia. Yes. And the day before, too. *(Smiling)* She has spoiled me a bit, you see.

Otto. My mother went to town two hours ago. She performs tonight. *(To MRS. WAHL and ERNA.)* Were the ladies not in town today also? I saw you this morning driving to the depot during that fearful cloudburst.

Mrs. Wahl. We were at Korsakow’s funeral.

Otto. Why, of course, that was today. Tell me, is anything known — as to why he killed himself?

Erna. No.

Mrs. Wahl. Some one expressed the notion today at the cemetery that the suicide was prompted by wounded pride.

Genia. What? — Korsakow...?

Mrs. Wahl. Yes. Because, you see, he was forever hearing it said that he could play only Chopin and Schumann — no Beethoven and no Bach... Really I found it so too.

Otto. But that such a thing should drive a man to his death is a bit unlikely. Did he leave no farewell letter?

Erna. Korsakow was not one of the sort that write farewell letters.

Mrs. Wahl. Now how do you come to know that so definitely?

Erna. He had far too much taste and good sense for that. You see he realized what it means — this thing we call death. And therefore it was a matter of absolute indifference to him what sort of a face people would put on the matter next morning.

Otto. I read somewhere that on the evening before his suicide he dined with a few of his friends... and in the best of spirits.

Mrs. Wahl. Yes, that is what the papers always print afterward.

Genia. This time it happens to be correct. I know that because my husband was one of the friends that dined with him.

Mrs. Wahl. Ah...

Genia (Casually). As you know, business often detains him in the city until late, and then he always dines at the Imperial, — there is a sort of club table always reserved for his circle — a left-over of his bachelor days. Latterly, Korsakow was often with them, — he resided at the Hotel. And as Friedrich told me himself, — there wasn't the least thing unusual about him on that last evening. Why, after dinner they played billiards in the cafe.

Mrs. Wahl. What — your husband and Korsakow?

Genia. Yes. They even made a wager — and Friedrich lost. Next morning he sent one of the office clerks to the hotel with the cigars.... and — didn't you hear? Why it was the clerk that discovered the whole thing.

Mrs. Wahl. How was that?

Genia. Well, he knocked several times and no one answered. At length he opened the door to leave the cigars and...

Erna.... found Korsakow dead...

Genia. Yes. Dead on the couch, the pistol still in his hand...

Pause.

Mrs. Wahl. What a shock it must have been to the clerk! What did he do with the cigars? Did he leave them?

Erna. Mother believes in historical precision.

Genia. Forgive me, Frau Wahl but really, I quite forgot to ask. *(The throb of a motor becomes audible.)*

Mrs. Wahl. It stopped here.

Genia. That's Friedrich...

Erna. Then we can have a little tennis. Is the court in shape?

Otto. Surely. Mr. Hofreiter and I got in a few sets of singles yesterday.

Mrs. Wahl. He was in the humor to play tennis?

Erna. Why not, Mamma? I see nothing whatever against it. Let them dance the cakewalk on my grave... or even the Maxixe... Yes, by all means... The idea rather appeals to me.

Doctor Mauer (Enters, aged 35, tall, fair beard, pince-nez, scar from a sabre cut on his forehead, dark sack suit, not fashionably but by no means negligently attired). Good evening, all.

Genia. Ah, it is you, Doctor.

Mauer (Quickly greeting them all). My respects, Madam. *(To MRS. WAHL.)* Good evening, Miss Erna. Good evening, Ensign. *(To GENIA.)* Friedrich presents his compliments, Frau Genia; he is still busy at the factory. I motored there with him and he had the kindness to leave me the car for a few sick-calls that I had to make out here. He will come later by train.

Mrs. Wahl. I'm sorry, but we must go. *(To MAUER.)* I hope you will soon call on us too, Doctor. Although, thank Heaven, we find ourselves in the best of health.

Erna. But you will have to come soon, Doctor. We are going to Tyrol in July, — to Vols Lake.

Mauer. Ah!

Mrs. Wahl. We are to meet Gustav there. *(To OTTO.)* That's my son. He travels about all year. Well, not exactly the whole year — but, — I believe, I may say... a good deal.... Last year he was in India.

Erna. And I want to go clambering again.

Mauer. Do you? Then perhaps we may meet on some mountain peak. I expect to go to the Dolomites too. *(To GENIA.)* And I won't conceal, Madam, that I have a strong inclination this year to borrow Friedrich for the purpose.

Genia. For a Dolomite tour?... What does he say to it?

Mauer. He seems not entirely averse.

Mrs. Wahl. I thought that Friedrich since... since... the misfortune the last time had entirely given up mountain-climbing.

Mauer. Oh, but not for good.

Genia (Explaining to Otto). A friend of my husband's, a certain Doctor Bernhaupt, pitched off a cliff directly from my husband's side, and was killed on the spot. But that was seven years ago.

Otto (To Genia). What? Your husband was in that party?

Erna (Reflectively). It must be said... he hasn't much luck with his friends.

Genia (To OTTO). You knew about this?

Otto. It remained in my memory, naturally, because it occurred on the self-same cliff that — my father was the first to ascend more than twenty years ago.

Genia. Why, to be sure, it was Mt. Aigner.

Mauer. Mt. Aigner... really one forgets that it is named after a living man.

(Short Pause.)

Erna. The sensation must be an extraordinary one for you, Ensign, that there is a peak up there in the Dolomites to which you are, in a measure, related.

Otto. That isn't so extraordinary, my dear young lady. For they are both strangers to me, the peak and my father. I was a boy of four or five when my parents parted from each other.

Mrs. Wahl. And you haven't seen your father since?

Otto. So it befell —

(Pause.)

Erna (Moving to go). Now Mamma... I believe it is time...

Mrs. Wahl. Yes, really! I don't know when we shall ever finish unpacking *(To MAUER).* We moved out here only last Sunday. We are not even keeping house as yet. We are compelled to take our meals in that frightful park.

Erna. Why, Mamma, the food seems to agree with you.

Mrs. Wahl. But there are always so many people there, especially evenings... Well, good-night, Frau Genia. Coming with us a bit, Ensign?

Otto. With your permission. Good-night, Madam. Please remember me to Mr. Hofreiter.

Erna. Good-night, Frau Genia. Good-night, Doctor.

(Adieus. MRS. WAHL, ERNA, OTTO, Exeunt)

Mauer (After a brief pause, during which his glance has followed ERNA). There is a girl, whom one could almost forgive her mother.

Genia. Not such a bad sort, good Frau Wahl. I find her rather amusing. If that is the only consideration — *(She walks toward the veranda)* As I said to you once before, think the matter over, Doctor.

Mauer (Half in jest). I'm afraid I haven't enough polish to suit her. *(Following her slowly)*

Genia (Has gone up a few steps). I didn't know that Friedrich had anything to do at the office this evening.

Mauer. Oh, — I was to tell you, — he must wait for an important telegram.

Genia. America?

Mauer. Yes. Something to do with the patent rights for his new incandescent light.

Genia. It is only an improvement, Doctor. *(She sits)*

Mauer (Standing, leaning on the balustrade). As usual. At any rate the matter appears to assume tremendous proportions. I hear he wants to build an addition to the factory; in fact, to buy up the adjacent block of houses...

Genia. Yes...

Mauer. And besides, that company that has been at him so persistently, has applied again, concerning the purchase of the factory. He is to confer with his banker in the morning.

Genia. With Natter.

Mauer. Natter, of course.

Genia. They were at the funeral too, the Natters, I hear.

Mauer. Yes.

Genia. The scarlet car is said to have attracted much attention.

Mauer. Well, there's nothing for it. It is scarlet — and there you are!

(Short pause.)

GENIA *gates at him with a slight smile.*

Mauer. And by the way — the affair is over.

Genia (Still smiling quietly). Do you know that with absolute certainty?

Mauer. I can assure you, Genia.

Genia. Did Friedrich perhaps refer...

Mauer. No, you know he doesn't speak of such matters. But, — well, isn't the diagnostic eye of some use? What is more, the thing has been over for some time now. I assure you, Frau Genia, Friedrich is really always at the office or in the factory. You know him, if anyone does. His new incandescents must carry the world by storm or the whole thing's no fun to him. As for Mrs. Natter — well, in a word, so far as he is concerned she no longer exists.

Genia. After all it is reassuring to hear such a thing.

Mauer. Really, there never was any cause for anxiety. Adele is at bottom the most harmless person in the world. If it weren't that we happened to know —

Genia. Yes, *she!* No danger threatened from *her* side. But Mr. Natter, for all his superficial courtesy and good nature, I take to be a brutal creature. Even somewhat treacherous. And there were times when I really felt anxiety for Friedrich. As you can well imagine. Anxiety, as for a son — a rather grownup one — who is involved in questionable adventures.

Mauer (Sits facing her). It is really interesting, the way you look at things. One might almost believe that women who are born to be mothers have the incidental gift to be such to their husbands also.

Genia. Or to become such, my dear Doctor. I wasn't always such a motherly person. Some time back I was more than once on the point of clearing out.

Mauer. Oh!

Genia. With my boy, of course. I wouldn't have left him Percy, you may depend on that!

Mauer. You wanted to leave Friedrich...?

Genia. Yes, I did... and another time I even wanted to kill myself. Of course, that was long ago. Perhaps it only seems to me now that I could seriously...

Mauer. Of course... That is a thing you would never, never have done... If only to avoid causing him trouble.

Genia. Do you think me so considerate? There you are mistaken, Doctor. There was even a time when I was contemplating the most ruthless thing that a woman can do to a man, particularly a vain man... to revenge myself.

Mauer. Revenge?

Genia. Well, let us say — to even the score.

Mauer. Ah... That would at all events have been the simplest. And maybe a good deal might have been said for it. Well, perhaps it will come yet. Some day the hour of fate may strike for you too, Frau Genia.

Genia. And perhaps it needn't even be the hour of fate.

Mauer (Earnestly). With you, absolutely. That's just it. A pity, rather. For a long time my sense of justice has been protesting most emphatically against the idea that it should be just my old friend Freidrich — who is not to pay.

Genia. And who tells you, my dear Doctor, that Friedrich doesn't pay? Must it be precisely in the same coin? He pays, never fear — but in his own way. Things are not so well with him as you may imagine. Nor so well as he himself sometimes imagines. There are moments when I am honestly sorry for him. Indeed, Doctor, I sometimes believe it is a demon that drives him on.

Mauer. A demon? Well, I dare say — But there are women that would pack husband and demon both to the devil, in such a case... *(in reply to her questioning glance)* as, for example, the mother of our Ensign did, in days gone by, with her also rather demonic spouse.

Genia. Perhaps she loved her husband more than I do mine. Perhaps, indeed, it is the higher type of love that does not forgive.

Friedrich Hofreiter (Approaches. Slender, not very tall, refined features, dark moustache cropped English fashion; fair hair, grayed, parted at the right. Now and then he removes his pince-nez, which he wears without ribbon; walks with a slight stoop. Small, somewhat wizened eyes. Courteous, mild, almost feminine manner of speech, which at times turns to biting irony. His movements are graceful, but bespeak energy. He is elegantly attired, without a trace of foppishness; dark sack suit, above which a black overcoat, unbuttoned, with broad satin collar; black derby, tightly rolled umbrella with plain handle. He is now before the gate). Good evening. *(As he enters.)* How are you, Mauer? *(with a peculiar laugh, habitual to him, which often gives the impression that he is poking fun at the person addressed.)*

Mauer. Good evening, Friedrich.

Friedrich (At the head of the veranda stairs, kisses GENIA on the brow in perfunctory fashion). Good evening, Genia. How've you been? Anything new? Letters?

Genia. Nothing. And the mail hasn't come in yet.

Friedrich (Looking at his watch). A quarter of seven. About time they pensioned that postman. He gets to be more and more tedious every year. That may be verified by actual observation. Three years ago the last mail always came in at half past six. Now seldom before half past seven. Continuing at the same rate he will presently come waltzing in at midnight.

Genia. Would you care for tea?

Friedrich. Thanks... I had some at the office. Can't say it was good. Well, did Mauer tell you...?

Genia. Yes... Did you get your telegram from America?

Friedrich. To be sure. And it is as good as settled that I must go across in the fall.

Genia. Why, — you wanted to send one of your assistants.

Friedrich. Mm — the old story, — I must attend to everything myself. Want to come, Genia? On August 29th from Liverpool, or the 2nd of September from Hamburg. North-German Lloyd. I know the captain of the *King James*.

Genia. We'll see each other before then.

Friedrich. I hope to have that pleasure. *(Sits down.)*

Genia. You must be warm in your overcoat.

Friedrich. No. Seems cool, rather. Lord, what weather! Did it pour so out here, too? And the slops at the cemetery! By which I don't mean the speeches. Be glad you didn't — Really, that sort of thing should be abolished. How they did blabber on! *(Pause.)* Well, Mauer, did the motor behave? No mishaps? How did you drive her? Six miles an hour, eh? I know you wouldn't go in for more.

Mauer. Josh away. I put no trust in chauffeurs. There I'm exactly like you, — depend on myself exclusively. This week I've had three more cases of injury due to automobile accidents.

Friedrich. I say, how is Stanzides?

Mauer. Well enough, — for a compound fracture of the arm. I'm just going to him. He's impatient, of course. As a matter of fact he ought to be thankful he didn't break hit neck.

Friedrich. I as well, you forget. I shot out of the car too, thirty feet off, out on the road. Well, I suppose it's true that the insurance companies will soon accept no more acquaintances of mine.

Mauer. You Ve really no luck with your friends, as Erna Wahl remarked half an hour ago.

Friedrich. Ah, Erna was here?

Genie. Yes, with her mother. They just left with the Ensign.

Friedrich. Otto, too?... *(to MAUER)* Did you see him?

Mauer. Yes.

Friedrich. Well, how do you like him?

Mauer (Somewhat astonished at the question). Rather nice chap.

Friedrich. Strange how much he reminds one of his father. The same gray tone. Don't you think so?

Mauer. Possibly.... Personally I was never particularly smitten with this Doctor Von Aigner. Too much pose for my taste.

Friedrich. Personality, my boy. The two are often confused. A long time, too, since I last saw him. Seven years ago. In Bozen. Remember, Genia?

Genia. Yes, indeed, *(to MAUER.)* I rather liked him.

Friedrich. Yes, we found him at his best, then. At all events he was in better humor than I. *(to MAUER.)* You know, that was just a few days after the — after that Bernhaupt thing happened. And Aigner had just returned from an election tour; in high feather; somewhere he had been fired at, by Irredentists in some South Tyrolean hole, — and, of course, on the strength of it he received tremendous ovations from the Germans... had to make two or three speeches a day...

Mauer. Speeches! Yes — that was always his strong point. Even back in the days when he was president of our Tourists' Club and I was on the committee. And now most of all, as a member of the Chamber of

Deputies.... There he has a wealth of opportunity.

Friedrich. Oh, he doesn't merely talk, — he does something for the country. The new roads through the Dolomites would never have been built but for him. And the huge hotels — the automobile connections, really all his work. And what's more, in every Tyrolean village he has at least one child. Even outside of his constituency.

Mauer. Very well — we'll say he has personality. But now I'll have to go. Stanzides will be waiting —

Friedrich. Remember me to him. Maybe I'll look in on him to-morrow. You'll be back for supper, won't you?

Mauer. I don't know.

Friedrich. Come, of course you will.

Mauer (Hesitating). Thanks. Really I prefer to make the 10:20 to town. I must be at the hospital early in the morning.

Friedrich. Are you superstitious, Mauer?

Mauer. Superstitious? Why?

Friedrich. Well, I thought, perhaps you didn't care to sleep in the guest's room because poor Korsakow spent the night there a week ago. But I don't believe the dead are given their very first night off, to make ghostly visitations.

Mauer. My dear fellow, when you talk in that strain —!

Friedrich (Suddenly serious). Look here, you know — but it's horrible! A week ago he slept up there, and on the night before he had played in there — Chopin — the C flat Nocturne, — and something of Schumann's, — and we sat here on the veranda. Otto was with us, and the Natters — who of us would have dreamed of such a thing! If one only had an inkling as to the motive. Well, Genia, — did he say nothing to you?

Genia. To me?...

Friedrich (Without attributing any significance to GENIA'S hearing). Sudden mental aberration, people say. But now let someone tell us what that means: sudden mental aberration. Well, Mauer, perhaps you'll be good enough to explain it to me?

Mauer. First, I'm no psychiatrist, and in the second place, I am never astonished when anyone does for himself. We are all so often on the verge of it. At fourteen I once wanted to kill myself because one of the professors wrote a charge in my section-book.

Friedrich. In such a case I would have preferred to kill the professor.... Only in that event I should have become a wholesale assassin.

Mauer. Really now — an artist! These people are all more or less abnormal. If only in the matter of their self-

importance. Why ambition in itself is a species of mental disturbance. Lord, these speculative investments in immortality! And your interpretive artists are the worst off of the lot. Be they ever so great, nothing remains but the name, — not a jot of what they have accomplished. I can readily believe that *that* could drive one crazy.

Friedrich. Man, what are you saying! You didn't know him. None of you knew him. Ambition... He? — Why, he had altogether too much sense, too much philosophy, to let that get the better of him. For him pianoforte-playing was in reality a minor issue. Have you any conception of the diversity of things in which he took an interest? Kant, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche he had at his fingers' ends, and Marx and Proudhon as well. Why, the man's range was almost incredible. Trust me to pick the man to converse with... And then his eight hours' practice daily! Where in the world he found the time for all that — And twenty-seven years old! And kills himself. God, think of what the chap still had before him. Young, famous, and right handsome besides — and shoots himself to death. Now if some old ass were to do that, whom life had nothing further to offer... But it's just those that — Well. And on the evening previous one chats with him, dines with him — plays billiards with him... Why, Genia — what is there to laugh at?

Genia. I'm just after telling the story to Mrs. Wahl. She at once inquired what happened to the cigars you sent him the next day.

Friedrich. Ha... That woman is priceless. *(Taking out his cigar case, offers it to MAUER.)* You're not superstitious. I'm just smoking one of them myself. Of course Franz brought them back to me.

Mauer. Thanks. Really a pity to light it before supper. *(Takes one.)*

FRIEDRICH *passes him a light.*

CHAMBERMAID *brings letters.*

Genia (Taking them from her). A card from Percy.

Friedrich (Reading). Dear Mother. For you. Only a card again. The lazy lout.

Mauer. Why expect a thirteen year old boy to write letters? And in English, too.

Friedrich. Which he knows as well as he does German.

Mauer. Now, then, au revoir. I'll be back in a half hour. I say, this cigar's choked. And that's no superstition. No, stay. *(Exit.)*

Friedrich. Yes, it was well you didn't go, Genia. The speeches... and the weather besides. *(Glances carelessly through letters and newspapers.)* Oh, yes — as they lowered the coffin, the sun suddenly came out — *(pause.)* Isn't this Thursday? Why he was to have dined here tonight. That's something to tell Mauer... Do let me see Percy's card.

Genia (Handing it to him). He'll be here in four weeks.

Friedrich (Reading). Ah. And leads his class in Greek composition. Not bad. Perhaps he'll be a philologist or

an archaeologist. By the way, did you read the article in the London Daily Telegraph yesterday concerning the new excavations in Crete?

Genia. No.

Friedrich. Very interesting. That's another spot we must get to see some day. Yes.

(Pause.)

Genia. What you said before about America, — were you serious?

Friedrich. Most certainly. Well, wouldn't you care to come, Genia? In New York there wouldn't be very much to do. But in Chicago and in Washington, and St. Louis... And it seems to me it would be inexcusable not to embrace the opportunity to skid a bit further; say to San Francisco. Do you remember poor Korsakow telling us about his tour through California? It must be wonderful.

Genia. Why, that would be a trip of several months.

Friedrich. Yes, if things here are in full swing by then, the new building in particular, we could extend the trip into the spring. Well, think it over.

(Genia shakes her head slowly.)

Friedrich. Are you afraid of the ocean voyage? My dear, — with those new ships! And then they've just discovered an absolutely sure remedy for seasickness. Electric vibrators.

Genia. I don't believe I'll go. In spite of the electric vibrators. But I *did* have an idea —

Friedrich. Yes —.

Genia. While you are across, I could stay in England with Percy.

Friedrich (Gazes at her out of the corner of his eye). Hm. You wouldn't see much of him.

Genia. Oh, he could continue his studies as a non-resident. Just like my sister Mary's boys. Then he could live with me.

Friedrich. What sort of — How did *that* notion enter your mind so suddenly?

Genia. Not so suddenly. I mentioned it to you only the other day — Just try to recall. And since you seem determined in any case, to keep him there a few years more...

Friedrich. Oh, by all means. You see how splendidly he is getting on. It would be nothing but damned egoism to take him away now, in the midst of his studies, and bring him here, where lads are systematically trained to all sorts of sentimentalities and brutalities, instead of rowing and golf.

Genia. If only there weren't the longing...

Friedrich. Well, that must be taken in the bargain. Do you imagine that I don't long for him? But longing is,

in my opinion, a very healthy element in soul economy. Longing possesses the property of improving human relationships. Indeed it seems to me that human relationships should be based to a greater extent upon longing than upon habit. Besides we might accompany him to England, and then you could still decide whether to go with me or to remain with the boy over the winter.

Genia. I had rather you regard the matter as settled now.

Friedrich. Settled?

Genia. I should have many things to attend to before going to England. This business of emigrating can't be arranged for in a day.

Friedrich. Emigrating?

Genia. Call it what you please.

Friedrich. Why, what is it, Genia? Really you are strange today.

Genia. What is there so strange about it? That a mother,.. that an only son — When he gets to be a few years older, I shall have nothing of him. And now — the two summer months, a week at Christmas, and at Easter, — really that is insufficient. I have borne up under it long enough, — I simply can't any longer.

Friedrich. Why Genia, one might almost conclude that you are less concerned about being with your son than about getting away from.... from here.

Genia. I dare say you won't particularly miss me. But why speak of it? *(Rises.)*

Friedrich. Now really, what is it?

Genia. Nothing. I'm going into the garden. *(Goes down the staircase.)*

Friedrich (Glances after her. GENIA walks slowly rearward along the lawn. He has stepped down from the veranda; still in his overcoat, having left his hat upstairs; halts beside a rose bushy smells thereof). Absolutely no scent to them this year. I don't understand it. They look lovelier every year, but they have completely weaned themselves of the habit of fragrance.

GENIA *continues to walk toward rear, her hands behind her back.*

Friedrich (After a pause). I say, Genia.

Genia. Well?

Friedrich. Oh, when you've reached here.

Genia (Approaches slowly). Here I am.

Friedrich. Tell me, Genia, *(very quietly, fixing her with his glance)* could it be possible that you do know why Korsakow shot himself?

Genia (Quietly). What is the meaning of that question? You know I was no less astounded than you.

Friedrich. That was certainly my impression. Tell me, then, why do you wish to get away from me... so abruptly.

Genia. I don't wish to get away from you. I want to go to *Percy.* And not abruptly, but in the fall. To be with Percy.

Friedrich. Yes, or it would be too glaring.

Genia. What would be glaring?

Friedrich. It would almost resemble flight.

Genia. Flight? Flight from you? Really, I don't believe I am under any such necessity. We are distant enough from each other even at home —

(Pause.)

Friedrich. Come, Genia — Why, he is dead and buried, — Mr. Alexei Korsakow...

Genia. Why do you continually harp on him?

Friedrich. Steady, child, steady!... I only meant to say that there is nothing that can any longer... Of course, nothing would happen to him if he were still alive, any more than to you... but you will admit, this misunderstanding receives a peculiar significance... no, that isn't the word... well, I only mean to say that it is just today that this talk... that just today, the day on which Mr.
Korsakow was buried, your mood is so strange... Even if I am a husband, Genia, I'm not altogether a fool. Well, then — that there's something here that doesn't jibe, I'll stake my head. Now — what was there between you two?

Genia. You make me stare.

Friedrich. Yes, so I observe. But you will admit that is no answer. Please don't misunderstand me, Genia. I don't necessarily imply that anything really occurred between you and Korsakow. Perhaps it was just a flirtation. Yes, to be sure. For had there been anything else — why the suicide? Unless *(on the watch)* there *was* something more — and you sent him away. *(He has spoken very quietly throughout, but now has seized her arm).*

Genia (Almost smiling). Jealousy? Well!... You should really do something for your nerves, Friedrich. I don't know... You know I can't help... that the affair between you and Adele Natter is over — and that as yet there seems to be no one to succeed her.

Friedrich. Ah, you are very well informed. Well, for the present I refrain from investigating from what quarter this knowledge has reached you, — besides it is really not my fault that you never questioned me directly. I would have denied nothing. In no case should I have retorted that you ought to do something for your nerves. In fact that remark is... it isn't even like you. You ought to know me better. I really don't see

why you stand there like a stone image instead of answering me sensibly. Don't you trust me, Genia? Are you saying to yourself, "One can never tell, with him?" I assure you, Genia, — don't think I'm pretending, — I assure you I should understand — completely. After all, you would have been quite right — whether it were Alexei or — well, in matters of taste there can be no disputing. It is common knowledge that in these matters the wife is not usually guided by the husband's taste.

Genia. Why do you deny him now? Weren't you his friend? Today at the burial you are said to have been deeply agitated.

Friedrich. Did Mauer tell you that too?

Genia. No. It was Erna Wahl, as it happens. She wouldn't have believed that anything on earth could have affected you so.

Friedrich. Ah, Erna, the reader of souls. Of course, I was agitated. I grieve over him as I have seldom grieved over any one. And I would grieve none the less, if I knew with absolute certainty that he was — your lover. You can't begin to picture how immaterial and unessential certain things become when one has just come from the cemetery. I am not saying this merely to reassure you, but because it is true. Now give me your answer. The matter won't rest, I'm afraid, till you do. You may lie, if you like, but answer you must. I'll know if it's true, right enough. Well now — Yes or no?

Genia. He was not my lover. Unfortunately he was not my lover. Does that satisfy you?

Friedrich. Yes, it does. Because now I know that he was. You've betrayed it yourself. Don't you see? "Unfortunately he wasn't," you said. And since you loved him, he was, of course, your lover. What should have held you back? And as you put an end to it, he killed himself. Quite simple. And as to your reason for putting an end to it, that is still simpler. I'll tell you the reason: it is because such things simply must come to an end. Especially when one of the people concerned is some years the younger — and is for the most part away on concert tours. And besides, Percy will soon be back, and there may have been a certain — let us say — a feeling of purity... Well... really quite respectable. That makes it all clear, till we get to the idea of the trip to England. Yes, I understand that too. After all, if the affair were really ended for you, — the break...Yes, even if you were not passionately fond of him — or hadn't been...

Genia. Don't give yourself any further trouble. Read. *(She takes a letter from her girdle.)*

Friedrich. What do you wish me to...?

Genia. Read.

Friedrich. What... A letter? From him? A letter from him to you? — Ah, keep it. I don't want it. Why that would look... Thank you. If it wasn't your intention to show me this letter, kindly keep it.

Genia. Read!

Friedrich. Why should I read it? You can easily tell me what it contains. Perhaps it's in Russian. And the small writing. Bad for the eyes.

Genia. Read!

Friedrich (On the veranda. He turns up the wall light, puts on his pince-nez, and begins reading silently. Looks up at her in astonishment). What? You had no idea that he... When did you receive this?

Genia. An hour before you brought me the news of his death.

Friedrich. Then you knew of it when I came home? I declare... Well, then... at the risk of being taken for an idiot, — I noticed nothing, absolutely nothing. *(Continues reading silently, then looks up again, in surprise; continues reading half aloud.)* "Perhaps you were right to deny my presumptuous suit. We were neither of us versed in lying... I perhaps; not you.... in spite of all..." In spite of all... You must have complained a good deal about me.

Genia (Questioning glance.)

Friedrich (Reading). "That you do not wish to leave Him" — with a capital H, very flattering— "to leave Him, in spite of all, I can well understand now. You love him, Genia, you love your husband still. That is the solution of the mystery. And perhaps the feeling that I designate by the silly... "I can't make out the rest.

Genia. "The feeling that I designate by the silly word fidelity..."

Friedrich. Ah, you know it by heart, "The feeling that I designate by the silly word fidelity is nothing but the hope that he will still some day come back to you."

Genia. His version. You know that I hope nothing — and wish nothing.

Friedrich (Gazes at her; continues). "When I spoke to you yesterday, I had already determined—" Yesterday?... Was he here on Sunday? Yes, I remember, you walked up and down together on the path back there... yes... *(reads)* "When I spoke to you yesterday, I had already determined to let everything depend on your yes or no. I said nothing about it, because I feared if you had divined that it was utterly impossible for me to live on without you..." Somewhat explicit this Mr. Aexei Ivanovitch... *(Music heard from the park, muffled)* "I did not wish to owe my happiness to compulsion, or to any kind of pressure. Therefore..." Would you have said yes, if you had known that it was a matter of life and death?

Genia. If I had *known?* How can one know... I wouldn't have believed it. How could I have *believed* that?

Friedrich. Let me put it differently.

Paul Kreindl (Young, well dressed with a straining toward smartness, appears at the gate). Good evening. My respects, Madam.

Friedrich. Who is it?... Ah, you Paul. *(Steps down.)*

Paul (Enters). I hope I am not intruding. I come as ambassador from the Park; representing Frau von Wahl, Fraulein Erna, Ensign von Aigner and Lieutenant Stanzides...

Friedrich. Is he about already?

Paul... To make inquiry as to whether you would like to join them at the concert.

Genia. We thank you, but we have a guest to dinner, Doctor Mauer.

Paul. Take him with you, Madam.

Friedrich. No doubt you'll all be staying in the Park awhile.

Paul. Till they put out the lights.

Friedrich. Very well... perhaps we shall come later... but I am not promising.

Genia. At any rate please convey our thanks.

Paul. Not at all. We should all be delighted. My respects, Madam. Good evening, Mr. Hofreiter, I beg as thousand pardons if I have intruded. *(Leaves.)*

(Pause.)

Friedrich. Let me put it differently. What I mean is — suppose you could awake him from the dead — through declaring yourself ready... to be his...

Genia. I don't know.

Friedrich. You forget what you said before. "*Unfortunately* he was not my lover." If you yourself regret that he wasn't, he couldn't have been so very far from it. And now you are in doubt whether you would consent to be his, even if you could recall him... Why don't you admit it? He would only have needed to be patient a few days longer and you would have... why, you loved him.

Genia. Not enough, as you see.

Friedrich. You say that as if to reproach... I am not to blame, am I?

Genia. No. Only I. I know it.

Friedrich. And now you... regret... having driven him to his death?

Genia. I am deeply pained at his death. But as for regret, really I have nothing to regret. Had he told me what was in his mind.... Oh, I would have brought him to reason...

Friedrich. How?

Genia. I should have made him pledge his word...

Friedrich. Oh, cornel Don't tell me that. You wouldn't have asked his word, — you would have become his — That is self-evident.

Genia. I don't believe so.

Friedrich. Now, I beg of you!

Genia. Oh, not on your account. Not even on Percy's.

Friedrich. Then why?

Genia. On my own account.

Friedrich. I don't understand that, Genia. I couldn't have - done it. God knows why. I couldn't. *(Pause.)*

Friedrich. Here is your letter, Genia. *(She takes it. MAUER enters.)*

Mauer. Good evening. I hope I didn't keep you too long.

Friedrich (Moving toward him). Ah, Mauer. Well, Stanzides seems to be doing well. He is in the park at the concert.

Mauer. Yes, I took him there myself.

Friedrich. Paul Kreindl has just been here, to invite us to come over after dinner.

Genia. I'll see whether it is ready.

Friedrich. Oh, Genia, I've an idea... Let us go to the Park *now*. The devil knows why — but I have a hankering for music and a crowd. If it's all the same to you, Mauer.

Mauer. To me? It all depends on your wife.

Genia. I don't want to interfere, — but for myself, I should prefer to remain at home.

Friedrich. No, there's no sense in that. Come with us, Genia — it will do you good, too.

Genia. I should have to dress.

Friedrich. Then go and dress — we shall wait in the garden.

Genia. Does it mean so much to you?

Friedrich (To MAUER). What do you say? *(Nervously.)* Well, then we'll all remain at home... That ends it.

Genia. I'll be right down.... I'll just put on my hat.

Friedrich (after a pause). Well, Mauer —

Mauer. Really, I don't understand you... A wife must find that sort of thing unpleasant.

Friedrich. Oh they serve excellent food in the Park. *(Pause.)* And it is perhaps as well that you are going to town tonight. The chances for ghostly visitations in this house have appreciably increased.

Mauer. What's that?

Friedrich. You really do not deserve my confidence, because you blurt out everything you know, even things

I never told you...

Mauer. What do you mean?

Friedrich. Well, that the affair with Adele Natter is over, how goes Genia to know that?

Mauer. You ought to be glad that it is occasionally possible to say something to your credit.

Friedrich. Why, as to whether that was particularly creditable... Lord, Mauer, life is a rather complicated arrangement... but interesting... very interesting.

Mauer. What was it you meant before by the increased chances for ghostly visitations?

Friedrich. Oh, yes — Well, what do you think was the reason that Korsakow killed himself? Well, guess! — Hopeless love — for my wife. You're dumbfounded, eh? Hopeless love!...Now we know there is such a thing! He left a letter for her. She showed it to me. A remarkable letter... not badly written... for a Russian.

Genia (Enters with hat. The music is heard more distinctly). Here I am. Now, Doctor, I'll tell you frankly; it is only on your account that I am leaving our dinner in the lurch. Erna is there in the Park.

Friedrich. Ah! Erna! *(To MAUER.)* That *would* be the thing. Well, Mauer boy, pull yourself together. There aren't many I wouldn't begrudge her to. Although, it seems she takes me for a heartless rascal, and won't even believe that the death of a friend.... *(They leave the garden and step out on the roadway.)*

ACT II



THE HOFREITER VILLA. Adjacent portions of the garden. At lefty rear facade of the house. Door leading into the garden. On either side of the door two windows partly open. On the first story a small balcony. A lawn in the center. Further toward the right a large walnut tree, beneath it a bench, table, chairs. Farther back in the center a clump of trees, through which, in the background, tennis court is visible. About the tennis court, a high wire netting with benches outside. Two small benches beside the main door, under the ground floor window. Hot, sunny, summer's day.

GENIA *under the walnut tree in thin, white gown, book in hand, but not reading. On the tennis court a game is in progress. At the left,* FRIEDRICH HOFREITER *and* ADELE NATTER. *TO the right* ERNA WAHL *and* PAUL KREINDL. *The white costumes gleam* in *the sun, but the faces are hardly recognizable. Now and then we hear the cries, fifteen, thirty, forty, out, deuce, second, etc.*

Soon after the rise of the curtain, OTTO VON AIGNER, *in tennis costume, Panama hat, with racquet in hand, comes from behind the house and is about to go to the tennis court. He observes* GENIA, *who has heard his steps, and steps over to her. She greets him with a friendly nod.*

Otto. Good day, Madam — you are not playing?

Genia. As you see, Ensign. I haven't a chance in that company. *(A ball falls at OTTO'S feet. He returns it. Voices from the tennis court: Thank you.)*

Otto. Not all masters there, by any means... Except your husband, of course. Forgive me, Madam, I have interrupted you in your reading. *(About to leave for the court.)*

Genia. You're not disturbing me at all. I tried to read, but was on the point of falling asleep. The air...

Otto. Yes, it's warm, but then the days are fine. We can thoroughly enjoy our native forests.

Genia. You've had a nice long walk today, I presume.

Otto. Yes, I strolled over to the "Forest Hut" quite early with my mother.

Genia. She must be very happy having you with her again.

Otto. And I... The more so that this will be my last leave for a long time. I've been detailed to a ship that is to be away three years in the South Pacific.

Genia (Conventionally). Oh.

Otto. Our ship has been attached to a scientific expedition by the War Department.

Genia. I dare say, Ensign, you employ much of your leisure in study.

Otto. Why do you think that, Madam?

Genia. I can't imagine that a soldier's life in itself would entirely satisfy you.

Otto (Smiling). I may perhaps be permitted the observation that we of the marines have a great variety of things to do which may, without exaggeration, be called scientific.

Genia. Oh, naturally, — I had no doubt of that. I only meant to say that you must have other serious interests outside of your profession.

Otto. There isn't much time for such things. On my coming trip I do hope to get a nearer view of a sphere in which I have busied myself hitherto in a rather dilettante manner. The expedition with which we are connected is equipped for deep sea exploration. And since, moreover, I am friendly with one of the assistants... Ah, here is Frau von Wahl.

Genia (Rising). You must tell me more about that, Ensign. About these deep sea matters.

Mrs. Wahl (Coming from the house into the garden). How do you do, dear Genia. Good day, Ensign. *(Raising her lorgnette.)* Youth is already busy at its work.

Genia. If you count Friedrich among the youth.

Mrs. Wahl. Him especially. Oh, these men! Would you believe Ensign, that we are about the same age, Mr. Hofreiter and I? Really, nature has acted shamefully toward us women. *(Observing GENIA'S smile.)* Well, by no means decently. Who else is playing? Adele Natter, of course. I saw the car outside. The scarlet one. Here against the background of green it isn't bad. At any rate better than at the cemetery wall...

Genia (Smiling languidly). That's an impression you can't forget, as it seems, Frau von Wahl.

Mrs. Wahl. It isn't so long ago. Not two weeks.

FREIDRICH *and* ERNA *come from the tennis court*, *racquets in hand.*

Friedrich (With his malicious smile). How are you, Mamma Wahl? Good afternoon Otto. What about two weeks ago?

Mrs. Wahl. That they buried poor Korsakow.

Friedrich. As long as that? How in the world do you come upon that black-bordered theme?

Genia. Frau von Wahl saw the Natter car outside, the scarlet one.

Friedrich. Oh, I see.

Erna. Who would otherwise speak of a dead pianist on such a fine summer's day.

Mrs. Wahl. Have you ever seen such a deep-natured girl? That's another one of her performances on the philosophic tightrope, as her poor father used to say.

Friedrich. She had best take care lest she tumble off some day, our little Erna.

ADELE *and* PAUL KREINDL *come from the tennis court carrying their racquets. (Greetings.)*

Adele (Pretty, plump, clad in white, red belt, red scarf). Well, are we going to stop?

PAUL KREINDL *kisses* MRS. WAHL'S *hand.*

Friedrich. You might play singles.

Adele. He thinks I don't play well enough, the brute.

Paul. Why Madam? *(Tearfully.)* There is no one that plays too poorly for me. My game is unworthy of a suckling pig. Pardon the expression, but it's true. I don't know what's the matter with me. I seem to be clean bewitched. Or maybe it's only my new racquet. You'll excuse me, — I'm going home to fetch my old one. *(Leaves.)*

(The rest laugh.)

Friedrich. Why do you laugh? At least he's serious about it. That's the important thing. Whether it's tennis or skating, painting or curing the sick. I hold a good tennis player to be a far nobler specimen of humanity than a mediocre poet or general. Well, am I right? *(To OTTO.)*

Adele (To GENIA). When do you expect Percy back, Frau Genia?

Genia. He should be here in two weeks. And then you'll bring your children some time, won't you?

Adele. With your permission, gladly. But whether the big boy will condescend to play with the brats, — *(DR. MAUER comes. With him STANZIDES in uniform. Greetings.)*

Genia (To STANZIDES). Splendid to see you here again.

Friedrich. How's the arm?

Stanzides. Thank you. Our esteemed doctor has just massaged it for the last time. *(Throws his arm in a friendly way about MAUER'S shoulder.)* But it can't stand tennis as yet.

Mauer. That will come, too.

Stanzides (To ADELE). Are you ready for battle, Madam? I have just had the pleasure of speaking to your husband in the Park.

Friedrich. Well, Mauer, what's the trouble? We hardly see you any more. I thought you'd cleared out entirely.

Mauer. I've just come to say good-bye. I leave tomorrow.

Genia. Where are you going?

Mauer. To Toblach. From there I go off on a mountain tour — Falzarego — Pordoi —.

Friedrich. Would you take me, Mauer?

Mauer. Well, could you come, and would you?

Friedrich. Yes, why not? You leave tomorrow?

Mauer. In the morning by the express.

Erna (To MAUER). And when shall we have the pleasure at Vols Lake?

Mauer. In about a week, with your permission.

Friedrich (Honestly indignant). Ah, here we are planning clandestine meetings...

Erna. Without asking your permission, Friedrich.

Mrs. Wahl. We leave day after tomorrow, and go right through. *(During the following OTTO and GENIA stand side by side, and ADELE alone.)* Gustav is there already. You should see what he writes. Do you know who is managing the new hotel? Dr. Von Aigner.

Friedrich. Ah, Aigner!

Mrs. Wahl. And they say he is turning all the women's heads there in spite of his gray hairs.

Friedrich. Yes, the ladies have always been clay in his hands, — so be careful, Mamma Wahl.

(PAUL enters.)

Paul. Well, here we are again *(holding his racquet aloft.)* Here's my old one. At least one knows what he is holding.

Friedrich. Well, at it again. But now no excuses, otherwise you will have to take up another vocation, — law, haircutting, — *(They leave.)*

(FRIEDRICH, ERNA, ADELE, OTTO and PAUL to the tennis court. MRS. WAHL and STANZIDES follow).

Genia. Shall we go watch the game? Erna looks her best on a tennis court.

Mauer (Remains standing). Don't you get the impression, Madam, that she doesn't care two straws for me?

Genia. That is probably the most promising foundation for a happy marriage.

Mauer. Yes, if the indifference were mutual. But, — *(breaking off.)* I say, Frau Genia, do you believe that Friedrich is serious in his talk about traveling?

Genia. I — I don't quite know. I was a little surprised myself. True he has worked like a beaver the last few days — so he is entitled to a rest. But it wouldn't be necessary to — probably he wasn't serious. No, I don't believe he will go with you.

Mauer. And what is the latest about America?

Genia. Friedrich is going, that is certain.

Mauer. And you, Frau Genia?

Genia. Perhaps I too. *(Smiling.)* Yes, dear friend, *perhaps.*

Mauer. You will go together? Splendid, I am glad.

Genia. Why so ceremonious? I said *perhaps*.

Mauer. Ah, it will become a certainty. It would be too stupid if Korsakow were to have died in vain.

Genia (Taken aback). If Korsakow —? What do you mean? If Korsakow were to have died in vain?

Mauer. I have come to the conviction that Korsakow was destined by fate to become a sacrifice.

Genia (More and more astonished). A sacrifice?

Mauer. For you — and your happiness.

Genia. A sacrifice for my happiness? You believe in-such things?

Mauer. Oh, that doesn't necessarily mean that I believe in such things. But here I feel a sort of mysterious connection. Hasn't some such notion occurred to you?

Genia. To me? To tell the truth, I think very little about that sad affair.

Mauer. That only seems so to you.

Genia. And if I do think of it at times, the entire thing is strangely faded and distant. I assure you — quite distant. A sort of grayed mourning, — no more. I simply can't make myself better or more sensitive than I am. Maybe that will change. Perhaps in the fall. These summer days, I presume, are too bright for sadness and dejection. Not only in this is it so. I seem to take most things much more lightly. For example, I simply can't harbor any resentment against this good Adele. I even asked her just before to bring her children here sometime. I simply couldn't do otherwise. It seemed to me positively absurd to bear a grudge against her or anyone else. The woman touches me, rather. Somehow, she impresses me as a being long dead who doesn't know it.

Mauer (Gazing long at her). Well — *(Pause.)* And Friedrich must have attained to common sense, at last. Not a difficult thing when common sense is so closely identified with happiness as in this case. But if he fails to hold it now, —

Genia (Rapidly). For the present there is nothing to hold. You seem to have misunderstood me before, Doctor. Things haven't changed between us in the slightest degree.

Mauer. But they will change. One can't harbor any lasting anger against him, our Friedrich. My case precisely. I may be ever so enraged at him, — when he begins weaving his magic I am at his mercy.

Genia. That isn't my way, Doctor. I must be wooed, long and patiently.

OTTO, FRIEDRICH, ADELE, STANZIDES, ERNA, MRS. WAHL *and* PAUL *return from the court.*

Paul (As they approach, to ERNA). Truly, Miss, — upon my honor — your service — first class.

Friedrich. And her stroke? But then she learned her game from me.

Erna. Which, you will pardon me, teacher, was more than once a doubtful pleasure.

Friedrich. Oh?

Erna (To the others, particularly PAUL). He nagged me to the bone. If I'd let up the least bit — he could at once treat me as absolutely hopeless, a thoroughly despicable creature.

Friedrich (Casually). Yes, these things are closely linked with character, in my opinion.

Genia (Has in the meantime received a message from the chambermaid). Excuse me, ladies and gentlemen, tea is ready. And there are ices. No urging... If you please.

MRS. WAHL *enters with* STANZIDES; GENIA *with OTTO:* PAUL, ERNA *and* MAUER.)

Friedrich (To ADELE as she is about to enter the house). Oh, Adele. Unfortunately I have had no opportunity today to inquire about your health. How've you been?

Adele. Splendid. And you?

Friedrich. Not bad. Much to do, of course. We are building again. Next year we'll have six hundred workmen and in the fall I am going across to America.

Adele. Indeed?

Friedrich. It doesn't appear to interest you particularly Adele.

Adele. Oh, I knew all that from my husband. And I'd like to suggest that we use less familiar terms in addressing each other. The thing's over. I believe in clear relationships.

Friedrich. That they must be clear too, is new to me.

Adele. None of your jokes, now, if you please. Let us rather be thankful that it ended up so quietly. The time of our youthful follies is over for both of us, I think. My children are growing up and your boy, too.

Friedrich. Yes, that can't be altered.

Adele. And if you will permit me a word of good advice —

Friedrich. I am listening.

Adele (Changing her tone). Now, seriously, — I find that your manner toward that little Wahl girl is outrageous. For heaven's sake don't take this for jealousy. I'm not thinking about you, but about your wife.

Friedrich (Amused). Ah!!

Adele. She is really the most charming, most touching creature I have ever met. When she begged me before to bring the children — did you hear it? I sank into the ground.

Friedrich. That quite escaped me.

Adele. If I had known her better, — well — honestly you don't deserve her.

Friedrich. There I can't say I disagree with you. But if things on earth went according to deserts...

Adele. And as for Erna — be careful. A brother is not a husband. A brother sometimes notices things.

Friedrich. Ah, Gustav! My dear, such a thing wouldn't bother him... He is a philosopher. Really I don't know what's passing through your head. In fact, you're putting ideas into mine. A girl that I've bounced on my knee.

Adele. That has nothing to do with it. Age is no criterion for that sort of girl.

Friedrich. Ah, yes, Adele, — without thinking especially of Erna, so kindly suggested by you — it would really be splendid.

Adele. What would be splendid?

Friedrich. To be young once more.

Adele. You've been so long enough.

Friedrich. Yes, but I was so too soon. It is only now that I begin to understand how to be young. In fact, arrangements in this world are thoroughly stupid. One should begin to be young at forty, then he'd get something out of it. Shall I be frank with you, Adele? I have a feeling that everything that has gone before has been simply a preliminary study. And that life and love are just beginning.

Adele. Really, I don't understand you. There are other things in the world besides — us.

Friedrich. Yes, Oh yes, — the intervals between one love-affair and the next. Indeed these are by no means uninteresting. If one has the time and the inclination, he builds factories, conquers empires, writes symphonies, becomes a millionaire... but, take my word for it, all that is incidental. The essential thing is you! — You! — You!

Adele (Shaking her head). To think there are people who take you to be a serious man.

Friedrich. Why, do you consider that particularly amusing, — what I've just said to you?

Herr Natter (Comes in. A tall, rather well-built man in fashionable summer attire, mutton chops, wearing a monocle). Good day, Adele. Good afternoon, Hofreiter.

Friedrich (Extending his hand). Why so late?

Adele (In a friendly manner). Where have you been wandering about?

Natter. I must ask your forgiveness, my child. I've been sitting in the park, reading. Otherwise I should never get to it. Tell me, Hofreiter, is there anything more enjoyable than to sit out in the open under a tree and read?

Friedrich. Depends... What were you reading?

Natter. You will laugh. A new Sherlock Holmes. Really splendid. Gripping, in fact.

MAUER *and* ERNA *come from the house. Greetings.*

Erna (To FRIEDRICH). Any more tennis?

Friedrich. Why certainly. *(to NATTER.)* Will you have tea with us? We were just about —

Natter. With pleasure. Is Lieutenant Stanzides still here?

Friedrich. Yes, of course.

Natter. I want to invite him to go to the theatre with us. *(to ADELE.)* If you have no objection. I have taken a box for tonight in the Arena Theatre. *(MAUER and ERNA walk toward the right.)*

Friedrich. Does that trash amuse you?

Natter. Why not?

Adele. There isn't anything that doesn't amuse him. A more appreciative audience than my husband doesn't exist.

Natter. Yes, quite true. I do find life highly amusing. I enjoy myself royally. Always. At every opportunity.

FRIEDRICH, ADELE *and* NATTER *enter the house.*

Erna. And how did the accident occur?

Mauer. Apparently through the loosening of a stone under his feet. We were descending Mount Aigner. Friedrich was in front. Suddenly he hears a peculiar nimble overhead. Immediately thereafter tremendous boulders crash past him and after them, quite close to Friedrich, poor Bernhaupt himself. Friedrich doesn't like to speak of it. Even if he does act as if he were superior to emotion, that affair did make a terrible impression on him.

Erna. You believe so?

Mauer. The best evidence is that he has since undertaken no mountain trips.

Erna. Well, we must do Mount Aigner this year.

Mauer. You'll reconsider that, I hope.

Erna. It's all considered. In my case that always occurs before I speak.

Mauer. I shall write to your brother.

Erna. Why, my dear Doctor, you don't really believe that will help, if I have once put my mind to a thing? At most, I can promise to wait until you join us at Vols Lake.

Mauer. Do you really want me?

Erna. Why, of course. I engage you as guide with the usual fee.

Mauer. I've never flattered myself that I might make claim to more.

Erna. Was that intended to be morose or just clever?

Mauer. Shall I come to Vols Lake, Fraulein Erna? Yes or no?

Erna. I can't see any reason why you should change your original plan.

Mauer. Is it really impossible for you, Fraulein Erna, to give me a straightforward answer?

Erna. It isn't easy, Doctor. *(She sits under the walnut tree.)* You know that I like you. You should come in any case. It would give us the best opportunity to get better acquainted. But it goes without saying, you must not consider yourself bound, any more than I.

Mauer. Very wisely spoken, Fraulein Erna.

Erna. There's wiser coming. Hear me out, please. You must have some such thing as a sweetheart or lady-love, like all unmarried men. Well, then don't hurry. I mean to say, don't get the idea that after our conversation today you owe me anything like fidelity.

Mauer. Your friendly hint unfortunately comes too late. Of course, I won't deny that like all men, I, — and so forth... but I have put an end to it. I hate slovenliness in these matters — It would make me disgusted with myself.

Erna. You are a good man, Doctor Mauer. One feels that if a girl entrusts her fate to you she is anchored safe in the harbor. Then nothing more can happen.

Mauer. So I hope.

Erna. Only I don't altogether know whether such security is particularly desirable. At least for me. To be quite frank, Dr. Mauer, it seems to me at times, that I have something more to demand of existence than security and peace; something better or worse, I don't quite know.

Mauer. Don't take me for a fool, Fraulein Erna, if I flatter myself that there are many fine things, perhaps not absolutely the finest things that might be yours at my side. Life holds a great deal besides adventures of a certain kind.

Erna. Why, did I —?

Mauer. You didn't say so, Fraulein Erna, but that is your feeling. And small wonder — in the atmosphere that surrounds us here. But I assure you there is a sounder, cleaner atmosphere and I am confident that I can

accustom you to breathe in it freely and joyously.

Erna. You are courageous, Doctor. I like you — I do, indeed. Come to Vols Lake. We'll see.

ADELE, NATTER *and* STANZIDES, *come out of the house. After them* GENIA, OTTO, PAUL, FRIEDRICH, MRS. WAHL.

Stanzides. I used to watch the performance, not from the auditorium, but from above — a sort of bird's eye view from the hillock back of the arena.

Adele. That must be amusing.

Stanzides. Amusing, — I don't know. It's odd. Of course you see only a small part of the picture — the angle of a cliff, or a wall decoration, or some such thing. Of the actors themselves, you see almost nothing. Only here and there you get a disjointed word. But the most peculiar thing occurs if suddenly in the midst of all the jumble a voice penetrates to you which you recognize, — for example, that of a lady in the cast whom you know. Then you can suddenly understand the words also. Of all that the others say, not a syllable can be made out; but what the well-known voice speaks can be understood perfectly.

Adele (Laughing). The well-known voice!

Friedrich. One shouldn't say well-known instead of beloved, Stanzides. Say unknown. That's more correct, Stanzides.

Adele. Or friend, if you wish to be discreet.

Friedrich. Or enemy.

Erna. If you are indiscreet.

Mrs. Wahl. Erna!

Natter. It is getting late, — we shall have to be going, if we are to see anything of the performance. Please don't let me disturb you.

(NATTER, ADELE and STANZIDES leave.)

Paul (To OTTO). Last year, I once played for nine hours at a stretch with Dr. Herz. First for four hours, then we had an omelette, and then... *(continues talking to OTTO.)*

Mauer (Preparing to go). My hour too, has struck. *(To GENIA.)* Madam...

Friedrich. Why the hurry? If you'll be patient another quarter of an hour, I'll go with you.

Mauer. Are you serious?

Friedrich. Of course. Will you wait?

Genia. You are going with the Doctor? You mean to go to the city today?

Friedrich. Yes, I think that will be best. I have all the things there that I shall need for the mountains and Joseph can pack them in an hour; then I can leave in the morning with Mauer.

Mauer. Excellent.

Friedrich. Then you'll wait a quarter of an hour?

Mauer. Yes, I'll wait.

FRIEDRICH *rushes into the house*.

ERNA has been listening.

GENIA *gazes after* FRIEDRICH.

Mauer. He is a man of quick decisions.

GENIA *silent.*

Paul. Well, let us make the most of the last rays of the evening sun.

ERNA, OTTO, PAUL *and* MRS. WAHL *leave for the tennis court. After a moment of reflection* MAUER *follows*. GENIA *stands rigid; suddenly as she is about to enter the house* MRS. MEINHOLD *approaches her.*

Mrs. Meinhold (About 44, looking her age, her features somewhat worn, figure still youthful). Good evening.

Genia. Oh, Mrs. Meinhold, so late? I feared you wouldn't come any more. Now I'm all the more glad that you are here. Come along, Mrs. Meinhold, — over there — *(pointing toward the walnut tree)* your favorite spot.

Mrs. Meinhold (Observing GENIA'S embarrassment). Thank you, thank you.

Genia. Or would you rather come to the tennis court? They are still playing, and you like to look on, don't you?

Mrs. Meinhold (Smiling). Why, — it is just you I come to, dear Frau Genia. *(Goes with her to the walnut tree.)* But I haven't disturbed you, have I? You seem a little — Weren't you just going in?

Genia. No, not at all. It is only — My husband is going to town with Dr. Mauer. He is to go off with him tomorrow on a walking tour. Imagine, an hour ago, he himself knew nothing of it. The Doctor came in to say good-bye, naturally spoke of his plans and Friedrich was at once taken with the idea of wandering through the hills again as in former days. And now he will be off directly. *(Glances toward the balcony.)*

Mrs. Meinkold. Then my coming is untimely. You'll have much to say to your husband, since he is leaving so suddenly.

Genia. Oh, no, it is only for a short time. And we are not sentimental, truly.

Mrs. Meinhold. And then Percy will soon be with you.

Genia. Oh, my husband will be back before that. Percy won't be here for two weeks yet.

Mrs. Meinkold. You are looking forward to his coming, I dare say.

Genia. As you may imagine, Frau Meinhold. I haven't seen him since Christmas. Not an easy lot, to have your only child among strangers. But you have a similar story to tell, Mrs. Meinhold.

Mrs. Meinhold. Yes.

Genia. And now your son is to be away for several years.

Mrs. Meinhold. Yes, three years, probably, and far, very far.

Genia. To the South Pacific, — he told me about it. Well, that is truly — And still it seems to me that you are better off than I, Mrs. Meinhold. You have a profession, such a noble one. One that entirely fills your life. That helps a good deal.

Mrs. Meinhold. A good deal. Oh, yes.

Genia. Doesn't it? For a woman to be just a mother — it doesn't seem altogether sensible. You certainly wouldn't have consented to allow your Otto to join the Marines if you were nothing more than a mother.

Mrs. Meinhold (Simply). And what if I hadn't consented?

Genia. He would have remained with you. Oh, I'm convinced of that. If you had wished it, if you had asked it. Why he loves you so. He might have gone into something else. I can just see him as a country gentleman, or — yes, as a scholar.

Mrs. Meinhold. The question is still, dear Frau Genia, whether he would have been mine more than now, when he is to sail across the sea.

Genia. Oh...!

Mrs. Meinhold. I don't believe so. *(not sadly.)* One can't disabuse oneself too soon of the idea that we ever can really possess our children. Especially sons. They have *us,* we do not have them. I believe that one becomes more painfully conscious of the feeling when the children are always under one's roof. As long as they are small they sell us for a toy, — and later, for still less.

Genia (Shaking her head). Why that is, — really — May I say something to you, Mrs. Meinhold?

Mrs. Meinhold (Smiling). Why not? We're just chatting. Each says what happens to run through her mind.

Genia. I asked myself recently, when you gave utterance, if you will pardon me, to another such morose remark about humanity in general, whether your somewhat tragic view of life may not be an outgrowth of the roles you are called upon to play.

Mrs. Meinhold (Smiling). Tragic? Do I give that impression?

Genia. At least my view of life seems less serious than yours, Mrs. Meinhold. I flatter myself, for example, that I shall never cease to mean a great deal to Percy, — a very great deal. And you too, Frau Meinhold, have every reason, I believe, to cherish a similar hope. Your son, in particular, seems to me an exceptionally devoted — a... I am convinced that he worships you.

Mrs. Meinhold (Smiling). Let us describe it so.

Genia. And if he should some day sell you, as you put it, it will be for nothing mean. And only in such an event, I believe, the relations between mother and child might change a little. *(After a little reflection.)* No, not even then.

Mrs. Meinhold (After a slight pause). You seem to forget, — he is a man. How can anyone prophesy... even sons become men. *(With bitterness.)* It seems to me you must have some idea of what that means.

GENIA *casts down her eyes.*

FRIEDRICH *appears above on the balcony. He is tying his cravat and looks down with near-sighted, wizened eyes.*

Friedrich. I hear a noble familiar voice. Ha, I knew it. My respects, Mrs. Meinhold.

Mrs. Meinhold. Good evening, Mr. Hofreiter.

Genia. Is there anything you want Friedrich?

Friedrich. Oh, no, thank you. I'll be through directly. Then I'll come down. I'm going away.

Mrs. Meinhold. Yes, so Frau Genia has told me.

Friedrich. Well, *au revoir — (leaves the balcony.) —*

Genia. May I say something more, Mrs. Meinhold?

Mrs. Meinhold (Smiling). Why do you always ask permission, Frau Genia?

Genia. You impress me so much, Mrs. Meinhold. The things you say always seem so positive, so irrefutable. And one has the feeling that from you there are no secrets... and you understand people, oh yes,.. but aren't you... are you not a little unjust?

Mrs. Meinhold. That may be, Frau Genia... but after all injustice is a woman's only revenge. *(In answer to a questioning glance from GENIA.)* The only revenge for an injustice committed against her in the past.

Genia. But everlasting injustice in punishment of an outlawed injury — isn't that too much?

Mrs. Meinhold (Bitterly), — There are things which are not outlawed. And there are hearts in which nothing is outlawed. *(Pause.)* Does that seem tragic to you, dear Frau Genia? You're probably thinking "What sort of tales is she telling me, this old comedian? What is it she wants? Ages ago she left her husband and after that, as we hear, she adjusted her life to her own liking. At any rate she didn't seem to bemoan the separation.

What does she want?" Am I right, Frau Genia? Isn't that what you are thinking?

Genia (Somewhat embarrassed). No one can dispute that you had the right to live as you pleased.

Mrs. Meinhold. Of course I had. That's another story. And I don't want to make anyone believe that I am still pained by that time-worn affair — or indignant — Only, — well, I haven't forgotten it, that is all, and I don't say more than that. But just think, how much I have forgotten since. Joy and sorrow... forgotten — as if they had never been. And just this, that my husband committed more than twenty years ago, I can't forget. So it must have meant something. I think of it without pain, without anger — I simply know it, that is all. But I know it as I knew it the first day, just as clearly, just as finally, just as irrevocably. That is what I mean, dear Frau Genia.

Friedrich (Comes down in gray traveling suit; very brisk and animated. Kisses FRAU MEINHOLD'S hand). I am glad of the opportunity to say good-bye to you, Madam.

Frau Meinhold. Will you remain long?

Friedrich. That is uncertain. It will depend to some extent on how urgently I am needed here. I mean at the factory.

OTTO, PAUL, ERNA, MRS. WAHL *and* MAUER *come back from the tennis court. Exchange greetings.*

Otto. Good evening, Mother. *(Kisses her hand.)*

Mrs. Meinhold. Well, Paul, how did it go?

Paul. Don't a6k, if you please. From tomorrow on, I play only with the instructor.

Mauer. Well, are you ready?

Friedrich. Yes, surely. Ladies and gentlemen, *(shakes hands with each one.)* — dear Genia...

Genia. Excuse me, Doctor, may I have my husband for a few minutes.

Mauer. Why, —

MAUER, ERNA, MRS. MEINHOLD, OTTO *and* MRS. WAHL *leave them.*

Friedrich. You have something to tell me, Genia?

Genia. Only that I'm a little astonished at your decision. I had no notion that you wanted to leave today.

Friedrich. Nor I, my child.

Genia. Really?

Friedrich. That it would occur this very evening, certainly not. If Mauer hadn't chanced to come in, — But you knew that I wished to go off into the mountains for a few days. Now whether it's today or tomorrow or the day after... I see no reason for astonishment.

Genia (Stroking her forehead). Of course. You're right. It's only that the thing was never discussed. *(Constrained pause.)*

Friedrich. Of course, I shall wire every day, here as well as to the office. And write me. Send me all the news. And if anything comes from Percy send it out, even if it's only addressed to his "dear mother"... Yes, my child. Now — Mauer will really be getting impatient.

Genia. Why — why — are you leaving?

Friedrich (A trifle impatient, but not angry). Now, Genia, it seems to me I've answered that already.

Genia. You know perfectly well that you haven't answered it.

Friedrich. I must say this inquisitional manner is something entirely new in our household.

Genia. Of course, you are not compelled to account to me, but I see no reason why you should refuse to answer.

Friedrich. Well, my dear child, if you really insist that it must be explicitly detailed, very well. For sometime I haven't been feeling myself. That will probably pass, — sure to — but for the next few days I feel the need of a change of air and environment. At any rate it is certain that I must get away from here.

Genia. From here? From me!

Friedrich. From you, Genia, why I didn't — but if you insist — very well, from you, yes, Genia.

Genia. But why? What have I done?

Friedrich. Nothing... Who says that you've done anything.

Genia. Now do explain yourself, Friedrich. I am entirely...I was prepared for anything but that you should... so suddenly... From day to day, — from hour to hour, — I've been expecting to talk things over with you.

Friedrich. Yes, I observed that expectation, Genia. Yes. But I believe it is still too soon for — talk. There are many things on which I must become clear.

Genia. Why, what is there that isn't clear? You had the letter in your hand. You read it. If you had any doubts before that, — which I never believed, — since that night, for heaven's sake Friedrich, since that evening, it must have become clear to you, Friedrich, what a great injustice... God, is it really necessary to put it into words?

Friedrich. No. Of course not. That's just it. That evening — to be sure. Since that it has seemed to me, forgive me — it is of course not your intention — but, I have the impression, you see, that you were... *(hesitates.)*

Genia. Yes, — Well —?

Friedrich. As if you were playing up Korsakow's suicide against me, mentally of course. And that, — well,

that makes me a bit nervous.

Genia. Friedrich! Are you... I play up the suicide!God! How can you... That!

Friedrich. As I say, you can't help it. You don't intend it so. You are certainly not proud of the fact that he — on your account... that, so to speak you drove him — I know you are not conceited over your fidelity. I am aware of all that.

Genia. Well then, if you know that...

Friedrich. Yes, but that the thing happened at all...

Genia. What? What?

Friedrich. That he killed himself... That is the horrible thing. The thing I can't get over.

Genia. That he... *(her hand goes to her forehead.)*

Friedrich. Yes, yes, now consider — we can turn and twist it as we will... The cause of Korsakow's rotting in the earth remains yourself. Of course, you are innocent — in both senses — another man than I would likely kneel before you, worship you — like a saint — on that very account... You see, I am different... To me you have become, through that very thing... much more distant.

Genia. Friedrich!... More distant... Friedrich!

Friedrich. Now if he had been repulsive to you... why then it would have been the most natural thing in the world. But no, I know that you liked him... One might even say you were a little in love with him. Or — if I... had de served it of you... if you owed me what is called loyalty... but to that, I really had no claim — Well, it isn't necessary to speak of that now. But I can't help asking myself over and over again: Why must he have died?

Genia. Friedrich!

Friedrich. And, you see this thought — that something or other, something which is in reality nothing, a shadow, a phantom, a nullity, at least when weighed against so terrible, so irreparable a thing as death — that your virtue has driven a man to death, that is to me simply ghastly. Yes, — I can't put it in any other way... well... I daresay, it wilt pass in time… in the mountains... when we have been separated for a few weeks... but now, — well, there it is and I can't help it. There, dear Genia, that's the sort of person I am... others, of course, are different.

Genia (Silent).

Friedrich. I hope you won't hold it against me that, in compliance with your wish, I have said all this so plainly. So plainly, that it has already almost ceased to be true...

Genia. Oh, it remains true, Friedrich. *(The others come slowly nearer.)*

Mauer (In the lead). Pardon me Friedrich, but it is the highest time — I have something to do in the city

before...
Perhaps you might take a later train.

Friedrich. No, I am ready. *(Calling into the house.)* Well, Kate — Hurry. My overcoat and my small yellow bag. You'll find it on the couch in my room.

Mrs. Wahl. Well, a pleasant trip and au revoir but, let us hope, not good-bye.

Erna. Until we meet at Vols Lake.

Mrs. Wahl. Do you know what would be splendid, Frau Genia? If you came too.

Erna. Yes, Frau Genial —

Genia. Impossible, unfortunately. Percy is coming.

Friedrich. But not so soon. *(To MAUER.)* When do we get there?

Mauer. In about eight or ten days, I think.

Friedrich. Yes, Genia, that would be an idea. Really, consider it, Genia.

Genia. I... will think it over.

CHAMBERMAID *comes with overcoat and bag.*

Mauer. And now good-bye, Frau Genia. *(Takes leave of the others also.)*

Friedrich. Good-bye, ladies and gentlemen. Well, what are you all going to do today?

Paul. I have an idea. How about a moonlight party to Holy Cross?

Erna. Count me in.

Frau Wahl. You're going to walk it?

Friedrich. Oh that won't be necessary. I'll send back the car from the depot.

Paul. God reward the noble giver.

Friedrich. No ovations I beg. And now Good-bye. A pleasant time to all of you. Good-bye Genia *(takes GENIA'S hand again; she lets it fall listlessly. FRIEDRICH and MAUER leave through the house).*

GENIA *stands rigid.* PAUL, ERNA *and* MRS. WAHL *stand side by side.* OTTO *and* MRS. MEINHOLD *have exchanged a quick, significant glance.*

Otto (To GENIA, as he is about to leave). We must also —

Genia (Agitated, speaking rapidly). You are going? And you Madam? But why? We'll all find room in the car.

Erna. Why of course. Mr. Kreindl will sit in front with the chauffeur.

Paul. With rapture.

Otto. I'd like to say that the moonlight party will present some difficulties. We happen to be under the new moon.

Erna. The stars will do, Ensign.

Frau Meinhold (Looking skyward). I'm afraid you'll have to do without them too.

Erna. Then we'll plunge boldly into the dark.

Genia. Yes, Erna, perhaps that will be the jolliest. *(She laughs loudly.)*

ACT III



ENTRANCE — HALL or lobby of the Hotel Vols Lake. Entrance in front, left. (revolving glass door). At the right, opposite the entrance, a lift; on either side of which there are stairs leading upward. The background consists of a broad alcove with glass windows. A view of forest, hill, and mountain scenery. At rear right, a portiere, the door leading to the dining-room. By the entrance a long table, raised, on which are prospectuses, timetables, etc. Behind it practical wooden wall with small compartments for letters and room keys. In the lobby as well as in the alcove, tables, chairs and couches. Newspapers on the tables. Rockers. Moderate activity in the lobby which continues throughout the act without disturbing the action, and with occasional interruptions.

Tourists and guests entering from without, guests entering the lift, others going up and down stairs. Occasionally a waiter. Ladies and gentlemen who read at the tables or chat. A boy at the lift. Behind the table at the entrance stands ROSENSTOCK, *the porter, a red-cheeked, youngish man with small black moustache, black hair, shrewd, good-natured eyes, obliging and self-possessed. He gives newspapers to the boy who runs upstairs with them. Two men in mountain apparel come from without and go into the dining room.* ROSENSTOCK *noting memoranda in a small book.* DOCTOR MEYER *short, somewhat shy man in negligent summer attire comes down the staircase and approaches the porter, with a folded map in his hand.*

Meyer (Who has waited a short while before venturing). I say, Porter...

Rosenstock (Courteously, but not without a certain reserve). What is it Doctor?

Meyer. I wanted to ask, Porter... It was my intention to make a tour tomorrow and I wanted to ask whether a guide would be necessary to make the Hofbrand Lodge.

Rosenstock. Not at all, Doctor. The road can't be missed. There are plenty of signs posted.

Meyer. And if after making the Lodge I were to take in one of the peaks? For example, Mount Aigner.

Rosenstock (Smiling). Mt. Aigner? Mt. Aigner is the most difficult tour in the entire region. Very seldom done. Only by climbers of endurance and experience. This year it hasn't been made at all so far.

Meyer. Pardon me, I didn't mean Mt. Aigner *(looking at the map.)* I meant Rotwand. That isn't so bad, is it?

Rosenstock. By no means. Any child can climb that.

Meyer. No mishaps?

Rosenstock. Yes, — now and then people have tumbled off Rutland too.

Meyer. What?

Rosenstock. That can't be helped in the mountains. You'll always find amateurs.

Meyer. Mm. Well, thank you, for the present, Porter.

Rosenstock. Don't mention it.

DR. MEYER *leaves him*, *goes to the alcove*, sits down at *a table*, *studies his map*, and later exit. *Two young tourists — knapsacks*, *ulsters*, *mountain-staffs*, enter *from without.*

First Tourist (Very brusquely; note: the two tourists speak in the dialect of Saxony.). Good morning. Good evening, rather.

Rosenstock. Honored.

First Tourist. Tell me, have you a room with two beds, or two rooms with a bed apiece?

Rosenstock. May I ask the name?

First Tourist. Ah, — must one be introduced here? Bogenheimer, law student at Halle, Born in Merseburg, Protestant-Episcopal...

Rosenstock (Very politely and with a slight smile). I only wanted to ask whether the gentlemen have reserved a room.

First Tourist. No, we haven't.

Rosenstock (Very courteously). Then I'm very sorry. There is nothing vacant.

First Tourist. Nothing at all? That's bad. Not even a straw litter that we could snuggle into?

Rosenstock. No, I'm sorry.

SECOND TOURIST *has seated himself first in one chair then in another*, *neither seeming sufficiently comfortable for him.*

At last he drops into a rocker.

First Tourist (To the second). What's to be done now? *(To ROSENSTOCK.)* We've got fourteen hours of hike in our legs.

Rosenstock (Sympathetically). That's a good deal.

Second Tourist. I don't stir from this spot.

First Tourist. Do you hear, Cerberus? My friend won't stir from that spot.

Rosenstock. Yes, sir. The spacious hall has room for all.

First Tourist. Ah, a poet.

Rosenstock. Only in emergencies.

First Tourist. Well, what are we going to do?

Rosenstock. If the gentlemen would like to try the Alpenrose...

First Tourist. Is that a hotel, too?

Rosenstock. So to speak.

First Tourist. Do you think they'll have anything?

Rosenstock. They *always do.*

First Tourist. Well, let's try to pluck the Alpenrose, *(to the other.)* Come on, boy.

Second Tourist. I don't stir from this spot. Send a sedan-chair for me, Bogenheimer, when you've found something... or a donkey. *(He composes himself and soon falls asleep.)*

First Tourist (To ROSENSTOCK). Take good care of my friend. See that no one disturbs his slumber. *(As he goes out.)* Oh, wandering is the miller's joy... *(Exit.)*
A couple come in, *behind them boy with baggage.* ROSEN- STOCK *greets them.*

The Man. Is the room ready?

Rosenstock. Surely, your honor. Number 57.

Bell. Couple with boy take the elevator.

Paul Kreindl (Enters. Fashionable traveling suit, loose cloak, green hat with chamois hai,9 red gloves, tennis racquet with case. Boy with baggage behind him). Good-day.

Rosenstock. Honored, Herr von Kreindl.

Paul. Ah, what's this? You my dear Rosenstock? You here now? What will Semmering do without you?

Rosenstock. One climbs, Herr von Kreindl. From three thousand to forty-two hundred... feet.

Paul. Well, have you anything for me?

Rosenstock. Certainly. But, nothing below the fourth story. If Herr von Kreindl had only telegraphed a day sooner —

Paul. Oh, let it be on the sixth for my part. What's your elevator for?

Rosenstock. If she doesn't happen to be shipwrecked. By the way, you will find numerous acquaintances. Herr von Hofreiter is here, Frau von Wahl, her son and daughter, Dr. Mauer and Rhon, the poet, resting here on his laurels.

Paul (After each name). Yes... Yes... Yes.. (after RHON) Ah, he too. *(to the boy.)* Take that stuff up. *(As the boy is about to take his racquet.)* No, I'll keep that right in my hand. Oh, yes, Rosenstock, don't say anything

to Mr. Hofreiter that I've come. In fact, to no one. I want to surprise them.

Rosenstock. Mr. Hofreiter is out on a tour since yesterday.

Paul. Something big?

Rosenstock. Oh, no. He has given up the big tours since the accident seven years ago on Mt. Aigner. They went to the Hofbrand Lodge. There are ladies with them, too. Mrs. Rhon and Miss Wahl. Here comes the mother of the young lady now.

Mrs. Wahl (Coming down the stairs in a thin dress that is somewhat too youthful.)

Paul. My respects Madam.

Mrs. Wahl. Ah, good day, Paul. *(To Rosenstock)* Aren't they back yet?

Rosenstock. Not yet, Madam.

Mrs. Wahl *(To PAUL)*. I am in despair. Well, not exactly in despair but seriously concerned. Erna is out on a tour since yesterday. She was to be back to lunch today. It's now five. I've just been up to her room — you see she lives in close proximity to the heavens. Always her way. And she isn't here yet. I am beside myself.

Paul. Why, it's a large party, as I hear.

Mrs. Wahl. Yes, Gustav is with them and Friedrich Hofreiter, and Dr. Mauer and Mrs. Rhon.

Paul. Oh, well, then nothing will happen. Now, please, Madam, tell no one that I'm here, if the folks should come back while I'm dressing. I'd like to be a surprise. *(Disappointed.)* In your case I am sorry to say I didn't succeed, dear Madam.

Mrs. Wahl. Really you must excuse me today, my dear Paul, with all this excitement. What's new in Baden? Isn't Genia coming out?

Paul. Mrs. Hofreiter? She said nothing about it. I saw her only the day before yesterday. We were all together, a large party of us, at the Arena Theatre. Well, I'll tell you more news later on. For the present, I must give some attention to the external man. When one has put in a night on the train and then six hours on a wagon... *(To ROSENSTOCK.)* Lord, what connections!

Rosenstock. In three years at the latest we shall have a railroad up here, Herr von Kreindl. Our manager is going to Vienna at the next opportunity to see the cabinet minister.

Paul. That's sensible. My things are already upstairs, aren't they, Rosenstock?

Rosenstock. Yes, Herr von Kreindl.

Paul. Good. Well, my respects, Madam. And you won't say anything, will you? *(Takes the elevator.)*

Rosenstock (To MRS. WAHL). Madam need not concern herself. The party has taken a guide.

Mrs. Wahl. A guide? A guide to the Hofbrand Lodge? I knew nothing about that. I must say it seems strange.

Rosenstock. Oh, it's only on account of the knapsacks. You need someone to carry them. And besides your daughter is a splendid tourist.

Mrs. Wahl. So was Bernhaupt.

Rosenstock. Yes. In the midst of life we are in death.

Mrs. Wahl. Well — If you please!...

Rosenstock. Oh,.. No reference to your daughter, of course.

Mrs. Wahl. I left a book here somewhere, Rosenstock. Yellow binding — One of Rhon's. Ah, here it is. I think I'll sit down a bit and read... If I can.

Rosenstock. Oh, the book will distract you, Madam. Rhon writes so cleverly.

MRS. WAHL *sits down at one of the tables.*

Dr. Meyer (Has been standing nearby with unfolded map and now ventures to approach). I wanted to ask, Porter — I find a reference in Baedeker to the effect that the tour I am planning is extremely difficult, and I wanted to ask whether you wouldn't recommend that I employ two guides...

Rosenstock. You may even have two guides, if you like, Doctor.

Serknitz (Comes from the staircase, tally well-set, waterproof suit, carelessly dressed, tourist's shirt with pleats. To ROSENSTOCK ignoring MEYER). Any letters?

Rosenstock. Not yet, Herr von Serknitz. In a half hour, about.

Serknitz. Service, I must say. Why the mail has been in for some time.

Rosenstock. But it must be sorted, Herr von Serknitz.

Serknitz. Sorted! I'll sit down there and sort the whole batch for you in fifteen minutes. If I took as long to sort mail in my office at home — That's your Austrian dawdling. And then you complain about poor business.

Rosenstock. We're not complaining, Herr von Serknitz. We are filled up.

Serknitz. You don't deserve the climate, I tell you.

Rosenstock. But we have it, Herr von Serknitz.

Serknitz. I'll waive the ceremonious title, Porter. I'm not subject to flattery on that score. Besides it wasn't the mail I wanted to ask you about. It was my laundry.

Rosenstock. If you please, Herr Serknitz, with that I have nothing...

Serknitz. No, nor anyone else. The girl upstairs directs me to the office. I've been waiting three days now for my wash.

Rosenstock. I'm really very sorry. Here is the manager.

Serknitz. As usual, not alone.

DR. VON AIGNER comes from without with a very handsome Spanish woman from whom he now takes leave. She takes the elevator. DR. VON AIGNER, a man over fifty, still well appearing, fashionable mountain costume, knickerbockers, black hair well grayed, imperial beard, *monocle; courteous, not without affectation. Wears no hat.*

Serknitz. If you please, Sir —

Aigner (With forced affability). In a moment. *(to ROSEN- STOCK)*. My dear Rosenstock, the honorable Mr. Wondra expects to be here tomorrow instead of Thursday and will require four rooms, as you know.

Rosenstock. Four rooms, Sir, for tomorrow. How are we going to arrange that? Why I should have to... You will pardon me, Sir, but I should have to murder a few.

Aigner. Very well, Rosenstock. But try to do it quietly. *(To SERKNITZ, introducing himself.)* Dr. Von Aigner... What can I do for you?

Serknitz (With some embarrassment which he strives to conceal beneath an assumed ease.) — I have just... I must express my indignation or at least my dissatisfaction, — *(breaking out).* In short, the state of affairs here is outrageous.

Aigner. Well, I *am* sorry. What is your complaint, Mr. Serknitz?

Serknitz. I can't get my wash. I've been after it for three days. I find myself in the greatest embarrassment.

Aigner. So I observe. Hadn't you better see the chambermaid?

Serknitz. You're the manager. I apply to you. It has always been my custom to appeal to the highest tribunal. Really, I don't enjoy appearing in this state among your countesses and dollar princesses.

Aigner. Excuse me, Mr. Serknitz, but there isn't the least constraint here so far as dress is concerned.

Serknitz. No constraint? Do you think the difference in the treatment accorded your guests isn't noticeable?

Aigner. My dear Sir!

Serknitz. I'm speaking plainly, my dear Sir. If instead of Mr. Serknitz of Breslau you had a Lord Chamberlain or an Honorable Mr. Bulow before you, you would adopt a different tone. Yes, Mr. Manager, and it would be in order to hang up a sign outside in front of your door: In this hotel the individual begins at the rank of Baron, bank director, or American.

Aigner. That wouldn't be in accordance with the truth, Mr. Serknitz.

Serknitz. Do you think that because I didn't arrive in a motor car I'm not entitled to the same consideration as any trust magnate or cabinet minister? The man isn't born that may allow himself to patronize me, whether he wears a monocle or not.

Aigner (Calm throughout). If anything in my personal attitude should displease you, Mr. Serknitz, you will find me at your service, of course.

Serknitz. Ha! You want me to fight a duel with you? Is that it? That's the latest. You really should have that patented. A man complains that he can't get his shirts and other effects, and for that reason he is to be shot dead. Look, here, sir, if you believe that you are furthering the interests of your hotel in that way, you are making a serious mistake. I'd leave this ridiculous place, this Eldorado of snobs, strutters and stock market Jews with express speed, if I felt like making you a present of my wash. In the meantime I'll go see whether it's come. Good morning, Sir.

Aigner. Good day, Mr. Serknitz. *(Approaches MRS. WAHL to whom he has already nodded a greeting during the conversation.)* Good day, Madam.

Mrs. Wahl. I admire your patience, Sir.

Aigner. That comes with practice.

Mrs. Wahl. I wish I had some of your self-control.

Aigner. What's the trouble?

Mrs. Wahl. I'm in a terrible state of excitement. Our party isn't back.

Aigner. But I beg of you Madam... No one was ever lost going to the Hofbrand Lodge. Why it's just a stroll. Will you permit me? *(Seats himself.)*

Mrs. Wahl. Will I permit? Really one must be thankful if occasionally you're not otherwise engaged... Exotically.... Erotically...

Aigner. Exotically, erotically...? That isn't yours, Madam. You're not so pert, fair lady.

Mrs. Wahl. No, that's Rhon.

Aigner. Yes, I thought so. A poet, Mr. Rohn....Yes... What a handsome brooch you have there madam!
A cameo, eh? Really magnificent.

Mrs. Wahl. Yes, rather handsome, isn't it? And not at all expensive. Well, not exactly cheap, either. Swatek in Salzburg always saves these things for me. He knows my taste.

Albert Rhon (Medium height, corpulent, with black hair spotted with gray and somewhat disordered. Comfortable summer attire. Comes downstairs.) Good evening, Madam. Good evening, Sir. Well, have our tourists come back?

Mrs. Wahl. No! Imagine!

Rhon. Oh, they'll come. Maybe they've had a somewhat elaborate breakfast... My wife at all events.

A very handsome English woman steps in; to AIGNER, *with strong English accent.*

English Woman. Sir, may I beg a word?

Aigner. If you please. *(Walks toward the rear with her.)*

Rhon (To FRAU WAHL). You know who that is? His latest conquest.

Mrs. Wahl. That one? Why, yesterday you showed me another woman.

Rhon. Yesterday it *was* another woman. What a chap! Have you any idea how he carries on in this neighborhood? Tell me, Madam, haven't you ever observed the likeness of our head waiter to Aigner?

Mrs. Wahl. Do you really believe... You think the head waiter is his son?

Rhon. At least his nephew. Yes, the man's a wastrel. Even his nephews resemble him.

Mrs. Wahl. I can't understand your being in the mood for joking at such a time. They were to be back to lunch. Now it's half-past five. Really I'm reproaching myself for not going with them.

Rhon. There you're wrong, Madam. What could you have contributed to the rescue? We should only have one more victim.

Mrs. Wahl. Disgusting, your jokes, I must say. You seem to forget that your wife is with them too. How can a man allow his wife to remain away so long?

Rhon. You see, Frau von Wahl, mountain climbing is a thing I don't enjoy. In fact, I have no gift for things manual. Besides, I am writing a tragedy.

AIGNER *has come in again.*

Rhon. Really they should be back by this time. At least my wife. I'm accustomed to her company on my periodic returns to the commonplace. We spend the *entre-actes* together.

Aigner. Mostly at the buffet.

Rhon (Clapping him on the shoulder, good-naturedly). Quite right. Tell me, is it really such a safe proposition, this Hofbrand Lodge?

Aigner. As I remarked before, — just a stroll. Why I'd undertake that myself.

Mrs. Wahl. Why didn't you go with them, Sir? It would have been reassuring.

Aigner. Well, I am rather busy here, as you remarked before, Madam. And since I couldn't get very much further than — the Hofbrand Lodge, I prefer — not to go even that far.

Rhon. Very fine. But, Sir, it just occurs to me, doesn't the ascent to your mountain start at the Lodge, — to

Mt. Aigner, I mean?

Aigner. Ah, it was mine, once. It is so no longer... Nor anyone's else.

Rhon. It must be an extraordinary feeling to camp at the foot of a mountain which one was the first to climb, and not to be able any longer... If I might venture a comparison, — well, better not. Besides, I am convinced you only imagine that you couldn't get to the top. You see I have my idea of you. I regard you as a hypochondriac.

Aigner. Hadn't we best drop the subject, Mr. Rhon?

MRS. WAHL *utters a faint cry.*

Rhon. What is it, Madam?

Mrs. Wahl. Lord, perhaps they're on Mt. Aigner.

Rhon (Also a little unnerved). Impossible.

Mrs. Wahl. Why, without a doubt. Or they would have been back long ago. They have a guide with them, too. Why, of course. You sir, *(To AIGNER)* are in the plot. You had better confess at once.

Aigner. I can make oath that not a word passed...

Rhon. Here's a guide. Suppose we ask him?

Mrs. Wahl. Where? Oh that's Penn. Maybe it was he...

PENN *the guide stands talking to the Porter*. RHON *and* MRS. WAHL *rush towards him.*

Mrs. Wahl. Were you with the Hofreiter party, Penn?

Penn. Sure.

Mrs. Wahl. Where's my daughter?

Rhon. Where's my wife?

Mrs. Wahl. Why don't you speak?

Rhon. When did you get back anyhow?

Mrs. Wahl. Where are the others? Why are you alone? What's happened.

Penn (Smiling). Madam, we're all back. The young lady is a good sport.

Mrs. Wahl. What does that mean?

Rhon. Where were you?

Penn. Up Mt. Aigner.

Mrs. Wahl (With a faint cry). There! Frightful!

Aigner. But, Madam, they're all safely back.

Rhon. My wife was up Mt. Aigner? Why, how is that possible?

Penn. Naw, the little fat one warn't up there. Only Miss Erna and Hofreiter and Dr. Mauer.

Rhon. And what of my wife?

Mrs. Wahl. And my son?

Penn. They waited for us in the Lodge till we got back. *Mrs. Wahl.* Where are they now?

Penn. They all went in through the cafe so as not to make a fuss.

Mrs. Wahl. I must go up. I must see Erna *(To AIGNER.)* Oh, you... *(Goes toward elevator which happens to be at an upper story. Rings frantically. To AIGNER.)* I'd like to know why your lift spends most of its time up at the fourth story. That's another mysterious peculiarity of your hotel. *(To RHON.)* Are you coming up?

Rhon. I'll wait. *(The lift comes down with the boy. RHON takes MRS. WAHL aside.)* Just take a look at that boy. A remarkable resemblance —!

Mrs. Wahl. To whom?

Rhon. Well... *(Points to AIGNER.)*

Mrs. Wahl. Another son of his?

Rhon. Probably a grandson.

Mrs. Wahl. Heavens, you... *(goes up in the elevator.)*

Aigner (To PENN). Did you really make the Mount?

Penn. Yes, Sir. T'warn't easy.

Aigner. That I can believe.

Penn. You know, boss, I was expectin' the storm of las' week might'a' done damage. A couple of times we had to duck and the last hundred yards — oh, — the devil!... the way that pile was cut up since last year! Why there used to be places to step, anyway, and to fasten a rope. This time we had to hop.

Aigner. But it was fine up on top.

Penn. You know, Sir. It's always nice on top, especially on Mt. Aigner.

DR. MEYER *with the map entirely unfolded, advances shyly to the Porter.*

Rosenstock. There's a guide for you, Doctor.

Meyer. Thank you. *(Approaching PENN.)* If you please.

GUSTAV WAHL *comes in, dressed in fashionable summer attire; speaks with an affected somnolent drawl, and again at times with pointed significance; always with humor.*

Gustave Wahl. Good evening, Sir. Good evening, Mr. Rhon. Permit me to felicitate you upon your wife. She's a wonderful domino player.

Rhon. You played dominoes with her? Weren't you up on Mt. Aigner? You, such a great tourist? Last year I understand you were up in the Himalayas or...

Gustav. I've given up climbing. Now I'm only a lodge haunter. Not so bad.

Rhon. And you played dominoes the entire time while the others were hovering between life and death? I'm not surprised at my wife — women have no imagination. But you...

Gustav. We didn't play all the time. At first I attempted to begin a conversation with your wife.

Rhon. On the subject of Buddhistic Philosophy, I presume.

Gustav. For the most part.

Rhon. My wife isn't interested in Buddha.

Gustav. Yes, that's the impression I received. And so we played dominoes together. Outdoors, if you please. On a wonderful meadow abloom with rare Alpine plants.

Aigner. Since when do they have dominoes there?

Gustav. Oh, you'll always find them. This time I found them in my knapsack. I never leave home for any length of time without dominoes.

Aigner. Extraordinary taste.

Gustav. It's the most difficult came there is. More so than chess. Do you know how many possible combinations there are in the game?

Rhon. How should I know that?

Gustav. But I know it. I've studied the philosophy of games, for years.

Rhon. And you didn't tremble?

Gustav. Why so? I don't mind losing.

Rhon. While your sister hovered between heaven and earth?

Gustav. But my dear Sir, nothing can happen to my sister. She is to reach the age of eighty-four.

Rhon. You know that with absolute certainty?

Gustav. I've read her horoscope. She is born under Scorpio... She may wander in safety through a glacier at eighty-three if it amuses her.

Rhon. You are not trying to make me believe that you take such things seriously?

Gustav. Why not? With most people I can tell at the first glance under what constellation they are born.

MRS. RHON *enters; short, pretty, rather corpulent woman. Throws her arms about her husband.*

Mrs. Rhon. Here I am again.

Gustav (To AIGNER). Now take Mrs. Rhon for example.

Aigner. Yes —?

Gustav. Little Bear, undoubtedly.

Rhon. My dear, we are not alone.

Aigner. Oh, don't mind us.

Rhon (Coolly). Well, did you enjoy it?

Mrs. Rhon. It was wonderful.

Rhon. I hear you played dominoes.

Mrs. Rhon. You're not angry? I won.

Rhon. Well, it's better than if you had tried to climb mountains.

Mrs. Rhon. Do you know, for a moment I was almost tempted. Only they wouldn't take me along.

Rhon. Now that *would* be an idea. I don't want the happiness of being alone spoiled by anxiety for you. If you're not with me, I don't want to be compelled to think of you.

Gustav. Well, she didn't think of you, Master, I assure you. You will have something to worry about some day. I simply happened not to be her style.

Rhon. Tell me, Gustav, what makes you so tactless?

Gustav. Don't you know that I travel on it? And besides, what is tact? A virtue of the third order. Even the word is somewhat new. You won't find it in the Latin or Greek, or, — and that's highly significant — in the Sanskrit.

Mrs. Rhon (To RHON). Well, and what did you do in the meantime? Did you make any progress?

Rhon. Finale of the third act. The public, deeply moved, surges into the restaurants.

Mrs. Rhon. I seem to have returned in the nick of time.

Rhon. Yes, but this time the *entre-acte* will be short. Beginning with tomorrow morning I lock myself in again and remain invisible. And if you have nothing against it, I won't eat in the dining-room, but in the cafe so that I won't lose the mood through gazing at silly faces. Then you can play dominoes again.

Gustav. Madam, divorce him. How can anyone marry a poet? They're inhuman. It used to be much better when people kept poets as they did slaves or barbers. Similar conditions are still found in the Azores. But to allow poets to run around loose is the purest idiocy.

Friedrich (Enters clad in a fashionable tourist's costume). Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My respects, Madam. Well, dressed already? That was quick work.

Aigner (Who has been speaking to the Porter). Good evening, Hofreiter.

Friedrich. Good evening, Sir. *(To ROSENSTOCK.)* Nothing for me? No telegrams? No letters? Queer. *(To AIGNER.)* Well, I can report to you that nothing has changed up there, not on the peak at any rate. The road conditions have deteriorated, — Or is it that we are older? Now it's dangerous to climb up. But if this disintegration continues, it will be rank suicide.

Aigner. Yes, Penn told me.

Friedrich. Do you know, Aigner, when we reached the crevice, about nine hundred feet under the peak —

Aigner (Interrupts him). Please don't speak of it. All that is over for me. How did the little one hold up?

Friedrich. Erna? Splendidly.

Aigner. To take her up there... I must say...

Friedrich. She took us. I had no intention ever again to make Mt. Aigner. Where's Mauer?

Aigner. I haven't seen him.

Rhon. Tell me, Hofreiter how did you feel when you passed a certain spot up there?

Friedrich. O, that — Well, seven years are a long time. I've forgotten things that go back much less. I forget very quickly when I wish.

Rhon. Yes, I suppose one often encounters places where someone fell beside us, only one doesn't recognize them. Don't you agree?

Friedrich. If you had any notion how little I am in the mood for philosophizing, Master Rhon —

Paul Kreindl (Coming down the steps rapidly). Good evening, Mr. Hofreiter.

Friedrich (Somewhat indifferently). Ah, Paul. Good evening.

Paul. Good day, Mr. Rhon. I believe we've met. Now in the first place I have a mass of greetings to deliver.

First from your wife, then from Lieutenant Stanzides, then from the Natters, then from Frau Meinhold-Aigner, then from young Mr. Aigner.

Friedrich. Permit me — Mr. Paul Kreindl — Mr. von Aigner.

Paul. Ah, delighted... *(He is silent. Then to AIGNER having recovered himself.)* I have the pleasure of knowing your son.

Aigner (Calmly). I unfortunately have not.

Friedrich. Well, what's new in Baden. *(Quietly.)* Don't you know — isn't my wife coming?

Paul. Sorry, Madam said nothing to me.

Friedrich. Are they having a jolly time?

Paul. Splendid. Here lately we were all together in the Arena Theatre. Your wife will have written to you about it.

Friedrich. Yes, of course.

Paul. And before that, we were on the Common where there was a sort of public festival. We mixed with the crowd. We even danced.

Friedrich. My wife too?

Paul. Yes, of course, with the Ensign... And in the Theatre there was a sensation when the actors suddenly made the discovery that the celebrated Frau Meinhold was seated in our box. They really played to us.

Rhon. What was the piece?

Paul. Truly, I didn't notice.

Rhon. For such one pours out one's heart's blood.

Paul (To RHON). Ah, isn't that your wife? Excuse me gentlemen. *(Joins MRS. RHON and GUSTAV at a table.)*

RHON *follows them.*

FRIEDRICH *lights a cigarette and is seated.*

Aigner. I didn't know that my one time family visited with you so frequently.

Friedrich. Yes, we see each other now and then. Your former wife and mine are great friends. And I often play tennis with Otto. He's an excellent player. In fact, you may be congratulated upon your son. He has a bright future and is said to be very popular with his superiors. Perhaps he is the coming admiral of the Navy.

Aigner. You speak of a young man who is a stranger to me.

Friedrich. Tell me, Aigner, haven't you the slightest desire to see him again?

Aigner. To see him again? At most you might say to get acquainted with him. For the ensign of today probably bears not the faintest resemblance to the young gentleman whom about twenty years ago his father kissed for the last time.

Friedrich. Well, then, no desire to see him again, — but curiosity to become acquainted with him —? There will be an excellent opportunity. You have business in Vienna, I am told.

Aigner. Yes, I am going to see the Cabinet Minister. We want to construct a railroad, as you know, from Lake Vols all the way up here. You'll admit there's room for at least three more hotels here.

Friedrich. I'll make a proposition to you Aigner. Call on us at Baden. There is plenty of room in our cottage. We have a handsome guest's room. Yes, indeed. Very comfortable. Only that it is occasionally haunted by spirits of departed friends who once spent the night there — but that wouldn't trouble you.

Aigner. Against spirits of the departed I have no objection. But living spirits are distasteful to me.

Friedrich. Really it would give me a heap of pleasure, Aigner, to make you acquainted with your son. We could arrange it so nicely in our garden, — we playing tennis, — you suddenly appearing, a distinguished stranger...

Aigner. Thank you, Hofreiter. I am not saying that I should avoid a meeting of that sort, but a prearranged encounter would savor strongly of sentimentality.

Friedrich (Casually). Why so —?

Aigner. And you forget that at such an occasion I would certainly meet my divorced wife, and that I would rather avoid.

Friedrich. Well, as you think best.

(Pause.)

Aigner. Really there are extraordinary coincidences.

Friedrich. To what do you refer?

Aigner. That on this day, of all days, you should begin speaking to me of my son — right after your return from up there.

Aigner. A misfortune — yes...!

Friedrich. How did she discover it?

Aigner. In the simplest manner. I told her.

Friedrich. What? You —?

Aigner. Yes. That at least I owed her. Just because I worshipped her. I owed it to her and to myself. I should have felt a downright coward had I remained silent. One can't make things as easy as all that for oneself. Don't you find that I am right?

Friedrich. It was rather grandly conceived — if it wasn't just a sort of affectation or over-refinement... or convenience.

Aigner. Or all combined, which is also possible. For... the soul is — and so forth.

Friedrich. And in spite of this fabulous uprightness and in spite of all her love, your wife could not decide to...

Aigner. For heaven's sake, don't say ''forgive." Words of that sort absolutely do not fit the case. There was never any scene between us or anything of that sort. It was simply over, my dear Hofreiter, — over, irrevocably over, then and there. That we both felt. It could not but be over.

Friedrich. It could not?

Aigner. It could not. Well, let us leave the living in peace. The dead usually take care of that without our assistance.

Mrs. Wahl (Comes down the stairs). Ah there he is —!

Friedrich. My respects, Mamma Wahl.

Mrs. Wahl. With you, Friedrich, I shall never speak another word. Suppose she had pitched off. How would you face that? Could you ever look me in the eye? And as for Dr. Mauer, I am through with him, too. Where is he? It's monstrous. I could...

Friedrich. But Mamma Wahl, Erna would have climbed up without us.

Mrs. Wahl. Then you should have tied her.

Friedrich. She was tied, Mamma Wahl, We were all tied, to one and the same rope.

Mrs. Wahl. Strait-jackets are what you need, all of you.

Erna (Comes down clad in a thin white dress). Good evening.

Aigner. Ah, Good evening, Erna. Good evening. *(Takes her hands and kisses her on the brow.)* With your permission.

Friedrich. As old Liszt to the young lady pianists.

Erna (Kissing AIGNER'S hand). And as a very young pianist to the not particularly old Liszt.

Aigner. Oh, Erna...

Frau Wahl. Well! What next?

Erna. That hour was the most wonderful I have ever experienced, Herr von Aigner.

Aigner. Yes, up there!... Nevertheless, I hope, Erna, that you will experience still more wonderful ones.

Erna. That would hardly be possible. That life should again appear just as beautiful, might well happen. But that one should at the same time be so utterly indifferent to death, that, it seems to me can occur only at such moments. And that is the wonderful part of it.

(The mail has now arrived. ROSENSTOCK sorts letters, guests enter9 receive their correspondence, etc.)

Paul. Erna, permit me, also, to lay my admiration at your feet.

Erna. Good evening Paul. How are you?

Paul. What the devil — I beg your pardon. Isn't anyone surprised that I am here?

Friedrich (Seated). My dear Paul, it is a far greater surprise that we are here.

AIGNER *standing aside with a handsome French lady*.

Rhon (To MRS. WAHL). See there Madam, that's the one for tomorrow. He's assembling reserves.

Erna (To MRS. WAHL who has taken her letters from ROSENSTOCK). Well, Mamma?

Mrs. Wahl. From home. And here is a card from your wife. *(To FRIEDRICH.)* She wishes to be remembered to you, Friedrich.

Friedrich. About coming out here — does she say nothing?

Rosenstock. Here are some letters for you, Mr. Hofreiter.

Friedrich (Rising). For me? Ah, here is one from Genia.

GUSTAV *pressing his letters to his forehead.*

Mrs. Rhon (To GUSTAV). What are you doing there?

Gustav. I never read letters any more. I simply lay them on my forehead and know at once what they contain.

Mrs. Wahl (To FRIEDRICH). Well, is she coming?

Friedrich. No. She writes that Percy has postponed his arrival and has been invited to friends at Richmond where he will stay a week. The rascal! To have friends in Richmond already.

Rhon (Seated, reading his letters). Ha!

Mrs. Rhon. What is it?

Rhon. It is incredible. These questions of correspondents! Really people are getting more curious every day. Formerly they were content to ask whether you preferred macaroni or stewed peaches, — whether Wagner

should be given with or without cuts. But the things they want to know now, Hofreiter!

FRIEDRICH *at the next table*, *looking through his letters*.

Rhon. Here is a ladies' journal that inquires: *(a)* At what age did you first experience the joy of love? *(b)* Have you ever felt perverse inclinations?

Signer (To HOFREITER). I am just in receipt of an inquiry as to whether bathing is permitted in our Lake.

Rhon. At 40 degrees Fahrenheit... brr! —

Aigner. Now, if we could arrange for that it would be the end of Switzerland.

Rhon. Look here, — I have an idea. Of course, I should claim a share of the profits. You have tremendous water power here, these falls that rush down the mountain side. Why not warm your lake with electricity?

AIGNER *laughs*.

Rhon. You laugh — of course. But if I had any knowledge of technical matters, — I'd build the whole plant myself. So clearly do I see it all. But I lack the gift for things manual. If I had that I believe I should never have touched a pen.

Friedrich. Really I sometimes wonder whether it is not through some inner lack that poets — become poets.

Rhon. What do you mean?

Friedrich. I imagine that many poets are born criminals — without the necessary courage — or wastrels who do not like to incur expense.

Rhon. And do you know what manufacturers of incandescent lights usually are, Mr. Hofreiter? Manufacturers of incandescent lights — and nothing more.

Friedrich. Excellent, if it were true.

BOY *hands* FRIEDRICH *a letter.*

FRIEDRICH *opens it*, *smiles*, *bites his lip.*

ERNA *has observed it.*

Mrs. Wahl. Good-bye, I must go in to dress. Good-bye, little wife of the poet, good-bye illustrious bard.

GUSTAV *opening his letters.*

Mrs. Rhon. Why you're opening them after all.

Gustav. That is only as a check. People sometimes write the wrong things.

MRS. RHON *and* GUSTAV *go toward the rear, then exeunt.* RHON *exit. The hall is left nearly empty.*

Erna (Looking over FRIEDRICH'S shoulder). Love letter?

Friedrich. Guess from whom? Mauer...

Erna. Oh...

Friedrich. He has just received an urgent telegram from Vienna. Had to leave at once... He's already gone. Asks me to say good-bye for him.

Erna. I expected something like that.

Friedrich. I, too — That gayety of his at supper last night in the Lodge, — and then his moodiness today when we started our climb... On the way back he didn't say a word... Well, Erna, an open meadow, fifty paces from a lodge with twenty windows isn't the place for two people to rush into each other's arms.

Erna. You think he saw that?

Friedrich. Most likely.

Erna. And you believe if that hadn't happened on the meadow he wouldn't have left? There you are mistaken. Even if we hadn't so much as looked at each other he would have noticed, as others are noticing...

Friedrich. What is there for the others to notice?

Erna. How things are between us two.

Friedrich. Why, Erna, how can these people...

Erna. Oh, maybe there is a sort of halo about our heads.

FRIEDRICH *laughs.*

Erna. Yes, it must be something like that. I've often thought of it. How is it that people see such things at once...

Friedrich. I should have gone away, Erna.

Erna. That *would* have been a wise thing to do.

Friedrich. Don't be a flirt, Erna.

Erna. I'm not, really.

Friedrich. Then what are you?

Erna. I am — as I am.

Friedrich. There is your advantage over me. I am no longer the man I was. I am mad, since that kiss of yesterday, mad. Do come a little closer, Erna *(Takes her hand.)* Sit here, facing me.

Erna. Now don't be rude...

Friedrich. Erna, I didn't sleep a wink last night.

Erna. I'm sorry. I slept wonderfully well.

Friedrich. I am usually troubled that way in this damp air.

Erna. You should have done as I did... I took my blanket out on the meadow — our meadow — and lay down in the open air.

Friedrich. Weren't you cold?

Erna. No, I fetched your coat from the card room and put it around me.

Friedrich. Magic, too! That was superfluous, Erna.

Erna. And so I slept splendidly, from ten to three, under the stars, and then went back to the room to my dear, fat Mrs. Rhon.

Friedrich. Erna, Erna! I feel myself capable of committing some raging folly. I suddenly seem to comprehend all the nonsense at which I used to laugh. I understand window promenades, serenades... *(Gesture.)* I understand how one can spring at a rival with drawn knife, — how, for unrequited love, one can plunge into an abyss.

Erna. Why should you speak of unrequited love?

Friedrich (Seriously). Why deceive ourselves, Erna? That occurrence of last night, in fact the whole business, the moment up there on the peak, the handclasp, this fancy of belonging to each other, this tremendous sense of happiness, it is all, I presume, a sort of delirium, — mountain-giddiness. At least for you. It is an effect of the altitude, the rarefied air, the danger. I dare say I play the smallest part in your mood.

Erna. Why do you say that? I have loved you since my seventh year. Of course, with interruptions. But lately the case has become pretty serious. And now — yesterday and today — and up there — and here. Oh, Friedrich, how I should like to get into your hair and ruffle it!

Friedrich. Careful! That isn't necessary. Listen, Erna. I have something to ask you.

Erna. Very well, ask.

Friedrich. Now then! What would you say... attend carefully. I am quite sensible again. Erna, you know, of course, my marriage — I needn't tell you about that. The fault was mostly mine. At all events, we do not suit each other, Genia and I. And especially since the extraordinary affair of Korsakow, about which I spoke to you. Heavens, why make a long story of it? I want to divorce Genia, and marry you, Erna.

ERNA *laughs.*

Friedrich. Well?

Erna. You said before you felt capable of committing an act of raging folly.

Friedrich. Perhaps it wouldn't be if we were, from the beginning to look at it in the proper light. I know, Erna, that your love for me will not be a thing of eternity.

Erna. But yours for me!

Friedrich. More likely. Besides, Eternity! Next year there may be another Mount Something or other and it will be all over with eternity. Or it may begin all over again. So much for that. I only know, and I know with absolute certainty, that I cannot exist without you. I am dying with longing for you. I shall be unable to think, work, or engage in any rational undertaking, until you... until I hold you in my arms, Erna.

Erna. Why didn't you come for your coat last night?

Friedrich. I beg of you not to play with me, Erna. I am honest enough with you. Simply say no, and the thing is settled. Mauer is still within hailing distance. I have no penchant for becoming ridiculous. Will you by my wife?

Erna. Wife? No.

Friedrich. Very well.

Erna. Maybe later on, sometime.

Friedrich. Later on —?

Erna. Finish your letters.

Friedrich. Why should I. So far as I am concerned the factory may be blown to shreds. Everything may be blown to shreds. What do you mean by later? Life isn't so very long. I refuse to grant a respite. A kiss like that of yesterday is a pledge. Either of immediate departure or of an unconditional yes. Wait I cannot. Will not. Say no, and I leave here today.

Erna. I am not playing with you. I know to what our kiss pledges me.

Friedrich. Erna...

Erna. Haven't you always known that I belong to you?

Friedrich. Erna... Erna!

Sound of a kettle-drum heard. The tourist who fell asleep at the beginning of the act awakens from a dream, rises, cries out, fairly howls, and at length rushes off across the entire stage.

MRS. WAHL *comes down.*

Aigner (Meeting with her). Ah, that is a clasp I haven't seen. Charming!

Friedrich. Lord, how we have been chattering. I shan't have time to dress.

Mrs. Wahl. You are handsome enough as you are. Where is Doctor Mauer?

Friedrich. Oh, yes — he sends his respects; he received a telegram and had to leave suddenly.

Mrs. Wahl. A telegram? Doctor Mauer? Why, that is... You are keeping something from me. He fell from the cliff! He is — dead!

Friedrich. Now, Mamma Wahl, do you imagine we could sit here chatting so comfortably...

Mrs. Wahl. With you one can never know.

Friedrich. At least I should have worn black gloves.

Serknitz (Enters in frock coat, white scarf; goes to AICNBR). I have the honor to report, Sir — my laundry has arrived, and I took the liberty of dressing in a manner befitting your hotel.

Aigner. You look positively stunning, Herr von Serknitz.

SERKNITZ *goes into the dining room.*

MRS. WAHL *and* AIGNER *follow.* MRS. RHON, GUSTAV, Rhon, METER, *and others come down and enter the dining room.*

Friedrich (Loudly). Come, Erna. *(Softly.)* Do you remember what you said before?

Erna. Yes.

Friedrich. Then they are serving our wedding dinner in there.

Erna. And thank Heaven there will be no toasts.

Friedrich. And you are mine.

Erna. Yet.

Friedrich. Consider what you are saying, Erna. If I find your door locked tonight, I shall break in, and it will be over with us.

Erna. It will not be over with us.

Friedrich. Erna!

Erna. And I anticipate hours still more wonderful than the one up there on Mounta Aigner.

Friedrich. Erna!

Erna (At length with the full tone of truth). I love you.

(They enter the dining-room.)

ACT IV



Scene of Act II. Summer afternoon. Under the walnut tree. MRS. NATTER'S *two children, one a girl of nine, the other a seven-year-old boy, are playing under the supervision of their English governess who is showing them a picture book.* GENIA, NATTER, MRS. WAHL, DEMETER STANZIDES, GUSTAV, PAUL, ERNA, *OTTO, and* MRS. ADELE NATTER *come out of the house, little by little, in the order mentioned.*

Natter. The dinner in honor of our esteemed host's return was excellent. Too bad he wasn't here.

Genia. He must have been detained at the factory.

Natter. No wonder, after an absence of three weeks.

Mrs. Wahl. Have you telephoned to the office, Genia?

Genia. There was no reason to. I had expected him for dinner after his telegram, yesterday, from Innsbruck. *(She is now with the children.)* Do you like the pictures?

Children. Oh, yes.

Genia. You must ask your mother to bring you out here next Sunday. Percy will surely be here by then. What would you like to do now?

Gustav. Children, I'll show you a wonderful game which the good little Hindu children play on the banks of the Ganges. Now watch carefully. If you please, Miss, lend me your parasol. Thank you. Now here I draw three concentric circles in the sand. One of a diameter of three feet, the second of two feet, and the third of one foot and six inches. *(To the others who stand by and laugh — MRS. WAHL, PAUL, ADELE, GENIA.)* Permit me to state that the Hindu children get that with mathematical accuracy to the sixteenth of an inch. Now keep watching. We draw a tangent to the outermost circle, a second perpendicular thereto along the middle circle, a third parallel to the first touching the inside circle; thus, we get several segments. Now if you place in the most easterly segment — *(He takes a small compass from his vest pocket and says to the others who are again laughing.)* Something I always carry with me. In fact, I can't see how a respectable person can go about without a compass. Now, that's east over there. Into the outer segment there comes a small turtle, into the most westerly one a scorpion, whose sting, of course, has been removed. Now, let's see — what can we substitute for a scorpion here in Europe? *(The seven-year old boy begins to cry.)*

Adele. Now stop it, Gustav. Miss, 'Voulez vous' — Oh, bother! *(She gives up the French.)* If you please, Miss, will you take the children to the meadow back there — they'll have plenty of room to play there... *(to the children)* and there won't be anybody to tell you such rubbishy stories about scorpions and tangents. *(The governess leaves with the children.)*

DEMETER STANZIDES *has sat down on the small bench near the gate and taken up a newspaper which lies there. The position from left to right:* STANZIDES *at left on the bench; near him* MRS. WAHL *and*

OTTO; then PAUL *and* ERNA. *At the extreme right* GUSTAV, ADELE, GENIA.

Stanzides. Hear, hear! *(He reads.)* "As is reported from the Hotel Vols Lake, a young lady from Vienna, Miss Erna Wahl, in the company of the Vienna tourists, the manufacturer Hofreiter and the well known physician, Dr. Mauer, ascended Mt. Aigner, a peak, which, owing to its dangers..."

Erna. Come Paul, let's play tennis.

Paul. Unconditionally agreed. *(To ADELE.)* Madam? Ensign?

Adele. I never play right after dinner.

Otto. In a moment, I'll just finish my cigarette.

Paul. Good. We'll play only singles today. A singles' tournament. Let us hope that Mr. Hofreiter will be here in time to take part. Today the relative standing must be cleared up once for all. *(Leaves with ERNA.)*

Mrs. Wahl. What else does it say there?

Stanzides (Reads on). " —... A peak which owing to its dangers is notorious among the folk in the South West Dolomites. It is the same peak from which seven years ago a young physician, Dr. Bernhaupt, through an unfortunate accident.

Mrs. Wahl. There, Frau Genia, that's where they dragged Erna. I've never been so angry in all my life as I am at Dr. Mauer and your husband.

Gustav. They were so afraid of Mamma that both gentlemen beat a hasty retreat.

Genia *(With a glance at ERNA, smiling).* Yes, it seems that a bad conscience made Friedrich extremely uneasy. Every day I received a card from somewhere else, — Caprile, Pordoi, and heaven knows where.

Mrs. Wahl (Newspaper in hand, turning the pages). What paper is this, pray?

Natter. Madam must be proud of the fame of Miss Erna.

Frau Wahl. Proud — I?

Genia (Has stepped across toward the center of the stage, where MRS. WAHL is standing.) — What paper is that? I don't seem to know it... How did it get here?

Mrs. Wahl. There's a part marked in red.

Stanzides. One had better not read anything marked in red in such a paper.

Mrs. Wahl. This is really remarkable.
Adele, Gustav, Genia (All speak at once). What's remarkable?

Mrs. Wahl (Reads). "For some days there has been a persistent rumor in Vienna social circles which we repeat with due reservation. It concerns the suicide of a world-renowned virtuoso which created a profound

sensation in the early summer and was for the most part shrouded in darkness, which even the popular phrase ‘mental aberration’ did not quite clear up. The report states that the cause of this suicide was an American duel, but that the decision in this duel was not determined as usual through a white and a black ball, but by means of two white balls and one red one.” Two white and one red, — What does that mean? *(Embarrassed pause,)*

Genia (Quietly), — The game of billiards which is referred to was lost by my husband. Therefore, if it was a case of an American duel, Friedrich would have had to kill himself — Isn’t that so? *(Pause.)*

Stanzides. It is incredible that there is no defense against such infamies. Particularly since no name is mentioned.

Natter. They are too wise for that.

Mrs. Wahl (At last understands). Ah, the game of billiards. Why, of course, Frau Genia, you told us about that. Your husband sent the cigars to Korsakow in the morning. Why yes, I could testify to that in court.

Gustav. You won’t have to testify, Mamma. No one bothers about such things. *(ADELE and STANZIDES are on the way to the tennis court and disappear gradually from the scene.)*

Mrs. Wahl. Really that is... How does such a thing get into the paper? And why should Friedrich and Korsakow have... *(MRS. WAHL, GUSTAV and after them MR. NATTER go toward the tennis court.)*

Genia. You believe it?

Otto. This silly duel story? How can you think that?

Genia. No, but that this story was not entirely without foundation. In a word, do you believe that I was Korsakow’s mistress?

Otto. No, I don’t believe it.

Genia. Why shouldn’t you believe it?... Because I deny it? That doesn’t prove anything. I, in your place...I should believe it. *(Moves to go to the tennis court.)*

Otto. I don’t believe it, Genia. I swear to you I don’t believe it. Why speak of it? Please stay, please. Who knows whether we will have another undisturbed moment. I must be in the city early in the morning. I have a great many things to do there... Notifying the registration authorities, shopping, and then the night train to Pola.

Genia (Gazing at him). Tomorrow? So soon?

Otto. How shall I communicate with you?

Genia. Simply write. My letters are not opened. And if you wish to be particularly careful, write me as you’re speaking to me now — as to an old friend.

Otto. That is asking too much. That is more than I can do.

Genia. There would be another way — Not to write, not to write at all.

Otto. Genia!

Genia. Wouldn't that be the wisest? We shan't see each other again.

Otto. Genia! In two years I shall be back.

Genia. In two years!

Otto. If I still have your confidence, Genia. I could be back sooner, much sooner. There are other possibilities for me, you know that. I wouldn't have to go at all.

Genia. You must. Moreover, you should, which is a stronger commandment.

Otto. How am I to live without you?

Genia. You will live. It was beautiful. Let it be enough. Pleasant journey, Otto and the best wishes for your future.

(Pause.)

Otto. What will you do when I am away?

Genia. I don't know. Today, I don't know. What did we know a few weeks ago, a few days? One drifts, — one drifts on and on, God knows whither.

Otto. How can you... Oh, I understand. You are saying this to make the parting easier for me. Genia, remember, Genia.

Genia. I remember. Oh, yes, I remember. *(Bitterly.)* But forgetting begins just so.

Otto. Does it amuse you to give me pain?

Genia. Why do you take me for better than I am? I am no better than the rest. Don't you see that? I lie, I dissemble, I enact my rôle before people, — before Natter and Frau Wahl, before your mother as well as before my chambermaid. I play the respectable woman — and at night I leave the window open for my lover. I write my son to remain longer with his friends, I write that to my beloved son... only that he may not disturb my adventure. And I write my husband that Percy insists on staying at Richmond, only that he too, may remain away longer. And when he returns today and takes your hand, I shall stand by and smile, and probably take pride in my cleverness. Splendid, isn't it? Do you think I am one to trust? I am like the others, Otto, believe me.

Otto. You're not like the others. No one would blame you. You were free. You owed him nothing. No one would hold you in less esteem for it.

Genia. No one?

Otto. No one — I know what's passing through your mind. No one, not even my mother, if she suspected.

Genia. Why wasn't she here today?

Otto. Because she doesn't care for large gatherings. That is the only reason. She suspects nothing. Why, she was here yesterday. What then should keep her away today?

Genia. That I can tell you. She thought Friedrich would be here and it would have been painful for her to see you, her son... it would have been unbearable for her to see the three of us together, the husband, the wife and the lover. That is what she feared and why she didn't come. Oh, I understand her. How well I understand her!

Friedrich (Appears on the balcony, speaks at once.). Good afternoon. *(GENIA and OTTO at the close of their conversation are almost directly under the balcony,)*

Genia (Not frightened). Friedrich!

Otto. Good day Herr Hofreiter.

Friedrich. How do you do, Otto.

Genia (Gayly). How long have you been here?

Friedrich. I came in ten minutes ago. *(He nods toward the tennis court where he has been observed.)* Good evening, Good evening. *(To GENIA.)* I just stopped to dress. *(To OTTO)* I'm glad I still find you here. I was afraid you had gone back to Pola, or that you were already on the ocean.

Otto. I leave tomorrow, Herr Hofreiter.

Friedrich. Ah, tomorrow. Well, I'll be right down. *(Leaves the balcony. OTTO and GENIA step away. The following spoken very rapidly.)*

Otto. You can't stay here.

Genia. Be sensible, Otto.

Otto. Now I feel it. You are not made to lie. You would betray yourself or confess voluntarily.

Genia. That is possible.

Otto (With a sudden resolve). Let me speak to him.

Genia. What are you thinking of?

Otto. Yes, that is the only way. You feel it yourself. Anything else would be unworthy, shameful.

Genia. I shall tell him as soon as you are gone. Tomorrow, perhaps today.

Otto. And what will happen?

Genia. Nothing, probably. And you will never come here again, never, promise me, never, not in two years, never.

Otto (As if enlightened). You love him. You love him again. That is where you are drifting. *(MRS. WAHL, NATTER, MRS. NATTER, STANZIDES, and GUSTAV come from the tennis court. ERNA and PAUL play on.)*

Friedrich (Appears in his tennis costume). Good afternoon, Genia. *(Kisses her on the brow. He greets the others also. To FRAU WAHL who does not take his hand.)* Well, Mamma Wahl, still angry with me?

Mrs. Wahl. I won't speak a word to you. Or to Dr. Mauer.

Friedrich. Well, we'll see.

Genia. We haven't seen Doctor Mauer lately.

Friedrich. Is that so? I expect he'll come today. I have written him. Well, Paul and Erna refuse to be disturbed.

Genia. Tell me, when did you arrive in Vienna?

Friedrich. Last night. I would have come out to supper but it was absolutely impossible.

Genia. We had a party in your honor.

Gustav. Yes, it was a splendid dinner.

Friedrich. Is that so? Perhaps you will be so good as to have them bring me a cup of black coffee, Genia. *(He sits under the tree and lights a cigarette.)*

Natter. You remained away longer than you intended, Hofreiter.

Friedrich. Yes. *(Fixes him with a glance.)* Are those your children romping about there on the lawn?

Adele. I thought Percy was here already. *(STANZIDES and MRS. WAHL have walked to the rear meanwhile.)*

Friedrich. Well, when do you expect him? Accepts invitations to English castles, the rascal.

Genia. I believe he will surprise us today or tomorrow with my sister Mary... because I haven't had news from him for three days.

ERNA *and* PAUL *come from the tennis court.*

Paul. My respects Mr. Hofreiter.

Erna. Good evening, Friedrich. *(Hand clasps.)*

Friedrich. Well, how have you been?

Paul. Fraulein Erna has beaten me again.

Friedrich. Well, did you have any more good times at Vols Lake?

Erna. Yes, splendid. Even without you, — think of that! Really it wasn't at all nice of you to disappear so

suddenly. Oh, and thanks for the card. You seem to have had some interesting trips.

Friedrich. I see your fame is celebrated in the paper today, Erna.

Frau Wahl. We've seen it.

Friedrich. Has that paper got here? An interesting sheet, isn't it? *(Pause. He is amused at the embarrassment of the others.)* It was beautiful up there on Mt. Aigner. Oh, Otto! Where is he? *(OTTO is standing aside with MRS. NATTER.)* I am to convey regards to you — that is, regards is hardly the word — I've seen your father.

Otto. Mrs. Hofreiter told me.

Friedrich. Too bad you're going away tomorrow. Your father was coming to Vienna in a few days.

NATTER, STANZIDES, GENIA *exeunt.* GUSTAV *follows*.

Otto. You know, Mr. Hofreiter, there have never been any relations between my father and myself.

Friedrich. They might still develop. Should, in fact. To think that you are about to go off to sea for so long without seeing your father. It isn't right. Don't you think so?

Otto. Yes, perhaps you're right. But I'm afraid it's too late.

Paul (Who has been standing with ERNA and FRAU WAHL, approaches). Well, Ensign, our singles match, if you please. *(To FRIEDRICH.)* We are playing only singles today. You'll have to join us Mr. Hofreiter. The Ensign is leaving tomorrow, and the relative standing must be cleared up once for all.

Friedrich. Why, of course, I'm at your service. Please don't let me disturb you. As soon as I've finished my coffee.

PAUL, ADELE *and* OTTO *exeunt.* ERNA *has remained standing behind his chair.*

Friedrich. Oh, Erna. *(Remains seated.)*

Erna. I'm so glad you're back.

Friedrich. Really? *(He kisses her hand over the back of the chair.)* I too.

Erna. And now I should like to know the real reason why you vanished.

Friedrich. You are odd, Erna. I told you. You were prepared for it. If had stayed there, in a few days, yes on the same day, the entire hotel would have known the whole business. That's the way these things go. You know, the halo about our heads. We've earned it honestly enough.

Erna. And if they had seen it?

Friedrich. Child, such a thing should not be revealed. The less so, the more you despise people. The world doesn't understand. Or it does after its fashion, which is worse. You may be thankful that I did not compromise you. Later you would have resented it.

Erna. Later? Oh, I see. I shan't marry, Friedrich.

Friedrich. Don't speak of the future, child. One should never prophesy, not for himself nor for others, — not even for the next minute, believe me.

Erna. And do you think that if I really loved anyone after you I could be silent about this?

Friedrich. Of course, you could. And you would be right. I assure you we deserve nothing better.

Erna. "We?" There are better men than you.

Friedrich. Do you think so? *(Rises.)*

Erna. What is it? Why are you so distracted? Why do you constantly look towards the door. Do you expect anyone?

Friedrich. Yes, Dr. Mauer.

Erna. Dr. Mauer? What do you want of him?

Friedrich. Oh, it's about some business.

Erna. Mauer isn't a lawyer.

Friedrich. But a friend.

Erna. Do you believe he still is?

Friedrich. Yes. Such relations never depend on the experiences which people have together... Otherwise disappointments would not hurt... if through them, the inner relations were simply to end. But that one still hangs on, that... There is only eternal love and eternal friendship and Mauer is and remains my only friend. That holds true — and even if he should kill me some day, that wouldn't change it.

Erna. What is there of such importance that you have to talk about?

Friedrich. It concerns my journey to America.

Erna. Then you are going across?

Friedrich. Yes. And there are many odds and ends of other days that need shaping; a task for which none but Mauer will do.

Erna. Of other days?

Friedrich. Why child, a wife couldn't be more curious. Besides they're all very tedious affairs.

Erna. Which seem to make you extremely nervous.

Friedrich. Do I give that impression? Nothing of the sort. It's only that I haven't had enough sleep.

Erna. Why so? You weren't on the train all night?

Friedrich. No, but I didn't sleep much. I made a window promenade.

Erna. Last night?

Friedrich. Yes, last night. Why are you surprised? I told you on a certain evening that I suddenly comprehended all these things. Window promenades, serenades, man-slaughter, suicide —

Erna. I don't understand. For whom was this window promenade?

Friedrich. For you, of course.

Erna. For me? What sort of a story —

Friedrich. Don't you believe me? Now listen, I came out here last night, right after my arrival in Vienna. It was almost midnight when I came under your window. You still had a light up. I saw your shadow passing over the curtains. If your room had been on the ground floor... who knows *Erna.* You were beneath my window — and then —

Friedrich. Then I walked away. I had seen your shadow, had been near you. I had been longing for that.

Erna. You had been longing, Friedrich? And where did you go then?

Friedrich. Back to Vienna. My car was waiting at the square. I had something to do at the office at eight o'clock this morning.

Erna. You were beneath my window... Friedrich!

Friedrich. Why should I tell you such a thing if it weren't true. What shall I swear by? By the sacred waters of Vols?

Erna. You were beneath my window, my sweetheart.

Friedrich. Quiet, quiet. *(He goes to the door of house.)*

Mauer (Comes from the house). Good afternoon, Friedrich. Good day Fraulein Erna.

Friedrich. How are you, Mauer.

Erna (Calmly). Good day, Doctor.

Mauer (Quite unembarrassed). Been back long, Fraulein Erna?

Erna. Only two days. *(To FRIEDRICH.)* You have something to say to the Doctor. Excuse me. *(Leaves for the tennis court.)*

Mauer. You sent for me. Here I am.

Friedrich. Thank you again for coming. I hope I didn't keep you from anything important.

Mauer. You write that you want my advice. I assume you are ill.

Friedrich (Gazes at him). Oh, that's it. No I haven't called for the Doctor, but for the friend.

Mauer. The friend, just so. Well, I'm here.

Friedrich. It concerns a silly story that you've probably heard or read.

Mauer. What story?

Friedrich. That Korsakow —

Mauer. Well —?

Friedrich. That Korsakow was the victim of an American duel.

Mauer. Ah.

Friedrich. Have you read it?

Mauer. Heard, to be accurate.

Friedrich. Well then I ask you; what shall I do?

Mauer. Do? You have the evidence to disprove it. Korsakow's letter to your wife.

Friedrich. What good is that? Why I couldn't — That would be in horrible taste.

Mauer. Well, then, simply pay no attention to it. The report will vanish as it came. It is not likely that sensible people will believe such a thing about you.

Friedrich. Even so. Something will remain. And someone must have been the first to utter this infamy. If one could hold him to account.

Mauer. The man will be difficult to trace.

Friedrich. For me he is traced. It is Natter.

Mauer. You think so?

Friedrich. It is his revenge. You see he knew...

Mauer (Rapidly). Everything?

Friedrich. Yes. It seems there are fewer deceived husbands than the wives or even the lovers believe.

Mauer. Have you any proof that the rumor emanates from him?

Friedrich. Proof? No.

Mauer. Then you can do nothing.

Friedrich. Confront him.

Mauer. He would simply deny it.

Friedrich. Punish him.

Mauer. That won't improve the situation.

Friedrich. Maybe my humor.

Mauer. The machinery you propose to employ would be too big for that.

Friedrich. No, I don't think so. Good humor is the principal thing in life.

Mauer. I should let the matter rest. With the best of intentions, that is the only advice I can give you. Now I'll say good night to your wife and go.

Friedrich. Mauer, are you angry?

Mauer. I, angry? No. But my desire to remain here is not overpowering.

Friedrich. I say, Mauer, you know that I left Vols Lake soon after you did?

Mauer. "Soon" is good.

Friedrich. Immediately after. On the next day. Do you know why? I ran away.

Mauer. Ah.

Friedrich. Yes, from myself. For that I was in love with Erna I admit without further ado.

Mauer. You owe me no account of your doings.

Friedrich. Of course not. I'm not giving you one. Only I can't see why your false suspicions...

Mauer. Whatever I suspect, whether justly or not, the affair is ended for me. Allow me to say good night to your wife.

Friedrich. Later. Now you will kindly remain here. We must talk this out. I assure you that you are mistaken. I kissed her, yes. Once. I'm not denying it. Such an embrace in the open air, with fine weather, six thousand feet above the sea, means nothing. I should call it mountain giddiness.

Mauer. Well, if you call it that, then it's all right.

Friedrich. Do you imagine there are many unkissed girls running about? Even on the plain it is said to happen occasionally. For a man to get the idea for that reason, that he is too good for a girl, is nothing but megalomania, if you'll excuse me.

Mauer. It amuses you to lie, doesn't it?

Friedrich. It does sometimes... But just now I'm not doing so. And now I'll tell you something else. Even if more had occurred than this kiss —

Mauer. I didn't ask you. And I assure you that now I'm rather indifferent as to how far things have gone between you.

Friedrich. There you are unjust.

Mauer. Ah!

Friedrich. Perhaps your position would have been better if she had been my mistress. The thing would be finished. Then you would be to a certain extent more secure.

Mauer. You begin to amuse me.

Friedrich. I am glad of that. That's the most important thing in any conversation. Whether one gets to hear the truth, one can't tell in any event.

Mauer. I could obtain it from Erna.

Friedrich. You think so?

Mauer. Lying is the only thing of which I consider her incapable.

Friedrich. There you may be right. And that after all is the important thing. In fact, I consider it rather narrow to judge women only from the erotic standpoint. We are apt to forget that in the life of every woman, even if she has lovers, there are many hours in which she has things quite other than love to occupy her mind, — music, charity work, cooking, raising her children — she may even be a very good mother, yes, and sometimes an excellent wife, and worth a hundred times more than the so-called respectable women. Now take Adele Natter.

Mauer. I hope you haven't asked me here to present your philosophic views.

Friedrich. No, that is just incidental. But since we are on the subject I would like to ask you whether you know anything about the affair between my wife and Ensign von Aigner.

Mauer (Astonished). Your wife and... Not a word. Why where could I... I haven't been here for three weeks.

Friedrich. Then I'm giving you the news. Well, what do you say to it?

Mauer. Perhaps it isn't true. And if it should be true.

Friedrich. You think it serves me right. I know. But I want to tell you that your gloating is entirely without point. Because, obviously the only basis for your gloating would be that I regarded the thing as something painful or at least irritating. And that is absolutely not the case. On the contrary, to me it is rather a release. I no longer wander about this house like a guilty man. I breathe again. It seems, in a manner, as if I were doing penance for Korsakow's death. And in the most sensible and painless way. She begins to be humanly nearer. We are again, so to speak, living on the same planet.

Mauer. You take it very philosophically. My congratulations. Obviously you don't believe it. Since one can never know such a thing with absolute certainty...

Friedrich. Oh, sometimes you can. For example, if you see the lover, at half past one in the morning, climbing out of your wife's window.

Mauer. What's that?

Friedrich. Well, what do you say to it? Last night at half past one I saw Mr. Otto von Aigner, Ensign in his Majesty's Marines, climb out of the window of the wife of the manufacturer Hofreiten. To which I could make legal oath.

Mauer. Last night at half past one?

Friedrich. Yes, I came out here last night.

Mauer. You did? And where were you until half past one, if I may ask?

Friedrich. (Oh, seems to me you're thinking of Erna again. In order to reassure you, I took the last train here from Vienna. I walked here from the station and entered the garden as I sometimes do, through the little door, from the meadow. And to my surprise I heard voices. I crept nearer and saw a gentleman and a lady sitting here under the tree. Genia and Otto. At midnight, here in the garden. What they said I could not understand. I remained at a discreet distance. After a few seconds, both get up and disappear inside. I leave the garden quickly through the same door, step around the house, and post myself so that I can easily see who leaves at the door. No one comes. For a half hour no one. The lights in the house are extinguished. Quickly I walk around the gate into the meadow where I keep my eye fixed on Genia's window. It was dark, the night was lovely. I lie down on the meadow in the shadow of the trees which stand near the fence. And I wait. I waited until half past one. At half past one the window opens, a gentleman climbs out, and disappears from my sight for a short time in the dark of the garden. Then I hear the gate open and immediately, thereafter, right past me, swings the slender figure of Ensign Otto von Aigner.

Mauer. And what did you do then?

Friedrich. I lay down on the meadow.

Mauer. Why, you lay there already.

Friedrich. Quite right. But I lay down more comfortably than before because I no longer had to keep watch, and I slept splendidly till seven in the morning. It is really delightful to sleep in the open on fine summer nights. Only recently some one sang its praises to me.

Mauer. I hope you're not thinking of any sort of revenge. The only thing you can and may do now is to end it once for all.

Friedrich. Who speaks of ending it?

Mauer. Surely that's understood. You could do it now without attracting much attention. It would merely be

necessary for you to leave for America somewhat sooner than you intended.

Friedrich. Genia will go to America with me.

Mauer. What?

Friedrich. Yes.

Mauer (Shrugging his shoulders). If you will allow me, I shall regard this communication as the last evidence of your confidence. Now...

Natter (Comes in). Good evening, Dr. Mauer, how are you? My dear Hofreiter, I wanted to ask you, since we can't stay any longer...

Mauer. Allow me now to say good night to your wife.

Friedrich. She will be pleased.

MAUER *goes to the tennis court.*

Natter. I wanted to ask you, Hofreiter, whether I might see you tomorrow at the office. I have a good deal to tell you. That company has applied again. They make an offer of...

Friedrich. Business tomorrow, Herr Natter.

Natter. As you please.

Friedrich. Today we will chat a bit.

Natter. With pleasure.

Friedrich. Tell me, Natter, what do you think of Demeter Stanzides.

Natter. Stanzides? A decent fellow. Somewhat sentimental for a lieutenant of Hussars. But, on the whole, a good chap.

Friedrich. Hasn't he any debts?

Natter. Not that I know.

Friedrich. Doesn't he abuse his subordinates?

Natter. I've heard nothing to that effect.

Friedrich. Doesn't he cheat at cards?

Natter. Do you believe that, Hofreiter?

Friedrich. No. I merely wanted to make it easier for you to find something against him later, when the affair between him and your wife is over.

They stand looking hard at each other.

Natter. I'm glad, Hofreiter, that you don't take me for a fool.

Friedrich. No, for a...

Natter. I warn you not to call me a scoundrel. It probably wouldn't suit me to settle the affair through a game of billiards. *Friedrich*. No, but in another way.

Natter. If I had wished that, not so very long ago there would have been a better opportunity.

Friedrich. Why didn't you do it? A man doesn't suddenly become... I know that as a young man you risked your life for less valuable considerations.

Natter. Less valuable? For other things.

Friedrich. If the thing affected you so, why do you remain with your wife?
Natter, — Let me explain. Because to me life without Adele would be absolutely absurd. I am hopelessly in love with her. Such things happen, Hofretter. There is nothing to be done about them. Have you any idea what measures I have tried to loose the inner ties that bind me to her? In vain, all in vain. I love her in spite of everything. Monstrous, isn't it? Yet, there it is.

Friedrich. And you revenge yourself against me by inventing a monstrosity?

Natter. Perhaps by spreading the truth.

Friedrich. Man, do you really believe that I... about the American duel?

Natter. Disprove it if you can.

Friedrich. I could. I know the reason for Korsakow's suicide. I know... But what am I coming to —? To justify myself to you — you, you...

Natter. Be careful.

Friedrich. I swear to you, you are mistaken. I swear it. *Natter*. By your wife's virtue, eh?

Friedrich. Sir... (Makes a step towards him.)

Natter (Grasps his arm). Quiet, no scene. I won't fight with you. But another word and...

Friedrich. Is it possible that I should be defenseless against you?

Natter. One is sometimes.

Friedrich. Yes, against a...

Natter. Against a man who finds life tremendously amusing, my dear Hofreiter, and nothing more.

Paul (Coming from the tennis court). Mr. Hofreiter, your singles match is due with the Ensign.

Friedrich. Oh, yes. I'm ready. The relative standing must be cleared up once for all... I know...

Natter. Don't let me keep you. *(In a whisper.)* Perhaps even to the point of life and death?

Friedrich. Perhaps.

MAUER *and* GENIA *come in from rear.*

Mauer (About to leave). Well, my friend, —

Friedrich. No, you simply mustn't go. Genia, you must hold him... with all your seductive arts.

FRIEDRICH, PAUL *and* NATTER *go to the tennis court.*

Genia. I am afraid my arts will prove insufficient.

Mauer. I'm sorry but I must go, Madam.

Genia. And I presume we shan't see you for a time.

Mauer. That is quite likely, Madam.

Genia (Gazing at him). I'm sorry I've lost a friend. I who am really without blame, at least toward you. Why don't you answer me, doctor? I don't want to force myself upon your confidence, the less so that I can readily imagine what is driving you away from here.

Mauer. There I am hardly warranted in complimenting you on your acuteness. Permit me now, Madam, to say goodnight.

Genia. It is not for me to permit or forbid. Especially as... Madam. Good-bye, Doctor. And please let me give you a parting injunction. Don't take the thing too hard. It would be too ridiculous, if you, a man who knows the serious side of life, were to attach any importance to such a frivolous game. Love affairs are nothing more, Doctor, believe me, and once you've found that out, very amusing to watch and to take part in.

Mauer. Once you've found that out.

Genia. Oh, you shall, my friend. The sad, stupid words that are trailing through your mind, — just let them evaporate, and you will see how immaterial they really are. They vanish, all. They blow away. Those sad, stupid words.

Mauer. Perhaps there is only one really sad thing in the world, and that is a lie.

Genia. A lie? Does such a thing occur in a game? Strategy or fun is what you call it there.

Mauer. A game? Ah, if it were so. I assure you Genia, I shouldn't make the least objection to a world in which love were really nothing more than an amusing game. But then, — honesty if you please! Honesty, — even to the orgy. That I could let pass. But this mixture of restraint and impudence, of cowardly jealousy and hypocritical complacence, of raging passion and empty lust as we see it here — that I find sadly disgusting. The freedom that is boasted of here lacks faith in itself. Therefore the gayety which it would like to assume is

a failure. Therefore it merely grins where it attempts to laugh.

Genia. You are unjust, Doctor. We are all trying our best. Of course the thing doesn't go as well as we would like. But we have the best intentions. Haven't you noticed? Adele Natter, for example, brings her children here. I chat with Erna as if the Lake at Vols were the most harmless sheet of water in the world. Friedrich plays his game of tennis with Ensign von Aigner...

Mauer. Why shouldn't he?

Genia. Oh, Doctor!

Mauer. Yes, I know that, too.

Genia. Who told you?

Mauer. Who? Be careful, Genia — Friedrich himself.

The tennis match is over. The participants come in slowly.

Genia. Friedrich? Of course he suspects. I saw that at once in his glance as he greeted us from the balcony. But why this cautionary "Be careful?" He won't hold it against me. Maybe Otto would have killed himself too, — like the other one. And one mustn't drive a young man to his death for such a trifle. Friedrich will be satisfied with me. Tomorrow when my lover is gone, I shall tell him the entire story myself.

Mauer. That won't be necessary. It isn't that he suspects. He knows. He saw the Ensign last night at half past one.

GENIA *winces*, *but quickly regains her composure.*

PAUL, GUSTAV, ERNA, STANZIDES, ADELE, MRS. WAHL, NATTER, OTTO *and* FRIEDRICH *come from the court.*

Genia. Well, who was the winner?

Paul. The old guard still lives. Mr. Hofreiter won, nine to eight.

Stanzides. Too bad you weren't there, Madam. It was a good game.

Friedrich. Well, Mauer, I see you remained after all. That's handsome of you.

Paul. Now the match of Miss Erna against Mr. Hofreiter.

Erna. It is too dark now. We shall have to postpone that until tomorrow. We can wire the Ensign the final result of the series.

Otto. Ladies and gentlemen, I really must go. *(He begins to take leave.)*

Friedrich (Following him with his glance). Too bad we can't play another game tomorrow, Otto. I really don't enjoy my victory today.

Paul. Why? The Ensign played splendidly and you still better.

Friedrich. I don't know. You weren't in form, Otto. You had a stroke that I had never observed in your play. Such a distracted, undecided, timid stroke. Due to your farewell mood, I suppose.

Otto. Perhaps embarrassment... in facing so strong and well rested an opponent. Well, when I come back in three years, you'll enjoy my competition a little more, Mr. Hofreiter.

Friedrich. Yes, if it were so certain that we shall see each other again. I never speak of such distant things. Three years! Just think what can happen in that time. We haven't control of things to that extent. There are occurrences against which all foresight may be in vain. And all prudence.

Natter. True. And perhaps that very quality is not one of the Ensign's outstanding attributes.

Otto. I fear so myself, Herr Natter.

Friedrich. That's a thing you really can't know, Otto — whether or not you are prudent by nature — In a calling that is based so completely on bearing and discipline as yours is, one really hasn't the opportunity of getting acquainted with oneself. Don't you think so?

Mauer. Enough psychology, for so late in the evening. *(to OTTO.)* Perhaps we may as well go together.

Friedrich (Paying no attention to the last words). Of course I have no doubt that you would be ready at all times to lay down your life for your country and your emperor, and even for lesser things. But in these matters, external pressure plays a strong part. In the depths of your soul, right down in the very depths, Otto, you are a coward.

Extended pause.

Otto. I must have misunderstood.

Friedrich. I don't know what you understood. At all events, I shall repeat it. Coward.

OTTO *taking a step toward him.*

FRIEDRICH *stepping toward* Otto.

Otto. You will hear from me.

Friedrich. I trust so. *(Softly.)* And soon. In an hour in the park.

OTTO *exit.*

PAUL *says something softly to* GUSTAV, *and follows* OTTO *with him.* ERNA *stands motionless.* GENIA *motionless*. MRS. WAHL *looks about her in perplexity*, *turns to* ADELE.

Natter. We won't disturb our friends any longer.

Friedrich. No disturbance, I assure you — on the contrary *(Aside to MAUER.)* I hope I can count on you.

Mauer. No, I'll have nothing to do with it.

Friedrich. As a physician, Mauer. You can't deny me that. It is your duty.

Mauer (Shrugs his shoulders). Very well.

Friedrich. Thank you. My dear Stanzides.

Stanzides. Consider me at your service.

Friedrich. Thank you. Natter may I request...

Natter. My dear Hofreiter...

Friedrich (Draws NATTER forward). I believe we are agreed in our views of life, are we not? Fit to laugh oneself to death. *Natter.* I've always said so.

Friedrich. The latest joke would have an additional spice for me if you agreed to be my second.

Natter. Gladly. The Ensign must be a good shot.

Genia (With a sudden resolve, going to FRIEDRICH). Friedrich.

Friedrich. Later.

Genia. Now.

Friedrich (To the others). You will excuse me. *(Going forward with her.)*

MRS. WAHL, *supping to* ERNA, *wishes to induce her to leave.* ERNA *repulses her, remains standing against the wall of the house.* MRS. WAHL *turns to* ADELE *who is standing under the walnut tree and gazing after her husband.* NATTER *and* STANZIDES *walk toward the rear.* MAUER *stands alone.*

Friedrich (To GENIA). Well —

Genia. What are you thinking of? What right had you *Friedrich.* Don't be afraid. I won't do much to him. Probably nothing.

Genia. Then why? If you had the slightest regard for me... If it were hate, jealousy, love —

Friedrich. Well, to be sure, of all that I feel damned little. But one doesn't like to feel the fool. *(Turns from her, follows NATTER and STANZIDES.)*

GENIA *stands forward motionless.* ERNA *stands against the wall of the house. The eyes of the women meet.*

ACT V



A LIGHT, PLEASANT room in the villa adjacent to the veranda. Large glass door leading to the veranda stands open. Cupboards to the right and left of the door. In the center a large table with cover; on it periodicals, books — Chairs. At the left wall a stove. In front of it a small table with chairs, etc. Pictures on the walls. Another door at the right, A wall clock in front at the left. Whatnot with books to the right of the stove.

GENIA *comes from the right in morning gown, very pale and agitated. Goes to veranda door, steps out on the veranda, back again, sits down at the large table, takes up one of the periodicals, stares into it, then straight before her.*

ERNA *without hat, in summer frock enters rapidly from the veranda.*

Genia (Rises, quickly composed). You, Erna? What news?

Erna. They haven't got back yet. Haven't you heard anything?

Genia. How could I? Pull yourself together, Erna. It can't possibly take place before this afternoon, probably not before morning. Very likely the arrangements are now being made.

Erna (Gazing at her). Yes, of course. Forgive my questioning you. I know I have no right, but the unusual circumstances —

Genia. You have as much right to tremble for someone, as I have.

Erna. I am not trembling, Frau Genia. That isn't my habit. I simply wanted to ask whether you had seen your husband today.

Genia. My husband went to the city last night. Probably to consult his lawyer. That is the usual thing, even if it is superfluous. He must be arranging his affairs. And probably burning some letters and papers. In short he will act precisely as if it were a deadly serious matter, though it is nothing but a bit of farcical vanity and a travesty on honor, as we all know.

Erna. I am not convinced of it, Frau Genia.

Genia. I am. Come Erna, let us go into the garden. The day is fine. We may as well chat. You have told me nothing about your trip. You have had interesting experiences at Vols Lake.

Erna. Is it possible that you can indulge in mockery at such a time?

Genia. I am not mocking. Far from it. You love him very much — my husband — do you not? Well, no wonder. The first, — that is always an experience. Or has that too lost its meaning? You must help me to understand. I can't get my bearings any more. Life has become so much more trivial of late years. When I was your age, certain things were still looked upon as terribly serious. That wasn't much more than ten years ago, but it seems to me the world has changed greatly since then.

CHAMBERMAID *enters right, with telegram. Leaves directly.*

Genia (Opens it quickly). From my sister Mary. She is coming at noon today with Percy. Here *(she hands the telegram to ERNA.)* A jolly reunion. But won't you come into the garden? Or let us take a short drive. Will you? The day is so fine. The air will do you good. You are pale... maybe you haven't slept well.

Erna. No, I was awake all night. And at five this morning I saw my brother go away. Any moment now we may hear how it turned out. For while we talk here, all is long since over.

Genia. Erna, I told you — Friedrich went to the city — to his lawyer probably.

Erna. He didn't go to his lawyer. I know it. I spoke to my brother this morning, as he was leaving. It was all arranged last night. The duel took place at eight this morning. I presume not very far from here. In Holycross Wood probably. And by now it is all over.

Genia. Well, then it's over. There is nothing more to do, is there? In Holycross Wood you think? And they are all sitting together in the public garden, under the shade trees, celebrating the reconciliation. The breakfast was all arranged for in advance by the seconds. People are easily reconciled when they were never really angry. What do you say, Erna, — are they drinking our health? Why not? Life is so merry. Perhaps they will come in together, arm in arm. Suppose we go out to meet them.

Erna. I'm going home. My brother may be back.

Genia. Yes — go home, Erna. I'll wait here.

ERNA *appears to be listening.*

Genia. What is it? Someone coming?

Erna (Goes to the veranda door). It is Mrs. Meinhold.

Genia (With a start). What —?

Erna. She is quite unconcerned. She knows nothing.

Genia. Why does she come so early?

Erna. I'm sure she knows nothing. She is walking slowly. Her face is perfectly calm. If she had the slightest suspicion her looks would show it. How could she know? Compose yourself, Frau Genia.

Mrs. Meinhold (Approaching). Good morning.

Erna. Good morning, Madam.

Genia. Ah, it is you, Mrs. Meinhold.

Erna. Good-bye.

Mrs. Meinhold. You are going? I hope I am not driving you away.

Erna. Not at all, Madam. I was just about to go. Goodbye, Frau Genia. *(Exit.)*

Genia (With tremendous self-control). I am very glad to see you again, Mrs. Meinhold. I was very sorry you didn't come yesterday.

Mrs. Meinhold. You had many people here and I don't like a crowd. Today I am here the earlier, as you see, Frau Genia.

Genia. It isn't so very early. *(Looking at the wall clock.)* Only ten o'clock. I thought it was near noon. Friedrich left long ago. As you probably know, Mrs. Meinhold, he returned yesterday.

Frau Meinhold. Of course I know *(Smiling.)* He sent his regards with Otto.

Genia. Your son is leaving today?

Mrs. Meinhold. My son has left already. He took the last train to the city yesterday. Tonight he goes to Pola.

Genia. So soon?

Mrs. Meinhold. Are you really learning that now for the first time?

Genia. Oh, I knew that. But I thought he would want to pass the last day with his mother.

Mrs. Meinhold. He has a great many things to attend to in the city today; so we said our farewells yesterday. It is better so.

Genia. Of course that is better.

Mrs. Meinhold. Can you imagine, Frau Genia, how I felt this morning as I sat all alone again at breakfast in my arbor? My little house has suddenly become so empty... as I haven't been accustomed to see it for a long time. I've been spoiled for a while — in spite of all. And the thought that he has gone away so far, and for so long, makes the house seem sadder and emptier. So I thought I had better go out...

Genia. I understand.

Mrs. Meinhold. Not with the intention of disturbing you so early Frau Genia, that I must confess. Not at all, I wanted to take a walk — a lonely walk in the woods. And yet, here I am. God knows how that came about. Something must have driven me here. *(Looks long at GENIA.)*

Genia (Returning her glance). Thank you.

Mrs. Meinhold. Oh, don't thank me. I simply had the choice of either being very angry with you or holding you very dear. When I left my home, I had by no means decided. For in these last days — I may tell you now that he is gone, Genia, — I have often felt anxious, —

Genia. Anxious?

Mrs. Meinhold. I know my son. And I saw how he suffered during these last weeks. He is not adapted — to false relationships —. I feared for him. You meant so much to him, Genia. More than his calling, his future,

than I, than his life. Oh, God, how I feared. And kept silence. Was compelled to keep silence. And even compelled to understand. I felt it coming the first day Otto entered your house. With all my anger, my fear, my jealousy, I was still compelled to understand. You were so alone, Genia, and so deeply grieved... throughout the long years. Even if it had been someone less worthy than Otto, I could not have blamed you. And now that he is away, all my anger and jealousy are gone, and I ask myself: How will she bear it? She — who loved him?

Genia. Mrs. Meinhold, I am not worth so much sympathy. I shall try to forget him. And I shall succeed. That is certain — as certain as that he will. It is my firm resolve to forget him. Why do you look at me so, Mrs. Meinhold? Don't you believe me? You mustn't be afraid. There is no understanding between us. I swear it. We shan't even write. That is fixed.

Mrs. Meinhold. You are very good, Genia.

Genia. I am only wise, Mrs. Meinhold. Only wise. *(Suddenly she gives way to a fit of sobbing. Her head droops down on the table.)*

Mrs. Meinhold. Genia, Genia, *(she strokes her hair.)* Don't cry, Genia. It is a small consolation, of course — but we will bear it together, his being away. You see that my choice is made and that I have decided not to hate you. Child, child, control yourself. We shall be friends, Genia. It must be so. Genia... Genial *Genia*. Frau Meinhold *(She takes her hand as if to kiss it.)*

Mrs. Meinhold. Can you really find nothing better to call me? I am his mother.

Genia (Shaking her head wildly). No, no, no. I can't.

Mrs. Meinhold (Gazing long at her). I had better leave you now. Good-bye. But if you weary of loneliness, come to me. You'll always find me ready to receive you. Good-bye, Genia.

FRIEDRICH *coming in from the terrace. Dark overcoat over his black dress coat. Buttons his overcoat quickly, composes his face.*

GENIA *stares at him questioningly.*

Friedrich (Forces a smile without nodding. To MRS. MEIN- HOLD in his laughing malicious way which now serves as a mask). My respects, Madam. *(He takes her proffered hand with a barely noticeable hesitation.)* How are you?

Mrs. Meinhold. Thank you. Back so early from the city?

Friedrich. From the city? No. I am just going there. I've been taking a morning walk. A... glorious day...

Mrs. Meinhold. I hear you've had a fine trip.

Friedrich. Yes, splendid. I am highly pleased with it. Excellent weather, interesting people. What more can one expect?

Mrs. Meinhold. Oh, by the way, I am to convey regards to you.

Friedrich. Regards — to me?

Mrs. Meinhold. You will be a little astonished. Regards from Mr. von Aigner.

Genia. From your husband?

Mrs. Meinhold. Yes, this morning. Before I left the house, a letter arrived from him, the first for many, many years. And in a few days he will be here himself. He is to confer with one of the cabinet ministers, he writes me.

Friedrich. Yes, I remember, — concerning the new railroad. It will be a fine thing, that new road. Besides, he will be a cabinet minister himself, some day, — your husband. All in all, a remarkable man, a most remarkable man. He still has a great future before him.

Mrs. Meinhold. Do you really think so?

Friedrich. Why not?

Mrs. Meinhold. His letter says something about poor health.

Friedrich. Poor health? I don't suppose he could do any more mountain climbing — but, being a cabinet minister is less exacting. And the fall is less dangerous. Don't imagine he is ill. The man is life itself. He will survive all of us. Oh, pardon me, — of course I can speak only for myself, — that is all that any of us can do. *(Laughs.)* A very interesting man.
We talked much together... in those few days. I like him.

Mrs. Meinhold. He seems to have conceived a strong regard for you too. Yes, it is an odd letter. Touching almost. And somewhat affected. That's a habit he is not likely to break himself of.

Friedrich. No, hardly now.

Mrs. Meinhold. Well, au revoir.

Friedrich. Au revoir, Madam. And when your husband comes, our house is, of course... *Les amis de nos amis*.. and so forth... Good-bye, Madam.

GENIA *(Accompanies her a short distance.)*

Mrs. Meinhold. Stay, stay, dear Frau Genia. Au revoir.

(Exit.)

GENIA *returns rapidly.*

FRIEDRICH *stands motionless.*

Genia. Well, — everything all right?

Friedrich (Glances at her). Well, —

Genia. He is wounded? Friedrich!

Friedrich. No. Dead.

Genia. Friedrich, don't go too far. This is not the time for mockery.

Friedrich. He is dead. I can't say it differently.

Genia. Friedrich, Friedrich... *(rushes to him, grasps his shoulders.)* You killed him Friedrich... and took his mother's hand.

Friedrich (Shrugs his shoulders). I didn't know she was here... with you. What could I do?

Genia. Dead... Dead! *(Suddenly nearing him.)*
Murderer!

Friedrich. It was an honest fight. I am no murderer.

Genia. Why, why...

Friedrich. Why? Obviously... it pleased me so.

Genia. That isn't true. Don't make yourself out more terrible than you are. You didn't want to do it. It was a frightful accident. You didn't want to... It isn't true.

Friedrich. At the moment that he stood facing me, it was true.

Genia. Horrible wretch! And you took his mother's hand. You didn't even hate him. And killed him. Monster! Vain, gruesome monster!

Friedrich. It isn't so simple as all that. You can't see inside of me. No one can. I am sorry for poor Frau Meinhold and my good old Herr von Aigner. But I can't help them, no, and not you. And not him. Or me. It had to be.

Genia. Had to?

Friedrich. As he stood facing me with his impudent young glance, I knew it... He or I.

Genia. You lie, he would not have... Not he.

Friedrich. You are mistaken. It was life or death. He wished it so as well as I. I saw it in his eye, as he in mine. He... or I.

ERNA *and* MAUER *come from the garden.* ERNA *remains standing at the door*. MAUER *going quickly to* GENIA, *presses her hand.*

Friedrich. Ah Mauer, here already?

Mauer. I had nothing further to do.

Genia. Where is the body?

Mauer. On the way.

Genia. Where to?

Mauer. To his mother.

Genia. Does she...? Who will tell her?

Mauer. No one has yet dared.

Genia. I will tell her. It is my duty. I am going to her.

Friedrich. Genia... Just a moment. When you return I shall hardly be here any more. I can't ask you to give me your hand, but we will say good-bye.

Genia (Remembering). Percy is coming. In less than an hour.

Friedrich. Percy? I'll wait for him... Then... the others... well...

Genia. What do you intend to do?

Friedrich. Go to the city. The best course will be to give myself up. Nothing will happen to me. I merely defended my honor. Perhaps they will release me on bail. Still — they would naturally suspect flight.

Genia. You think of all that? And he lies dead.

Friedrich. Ah yes, — it is easier for him than for me. For him all things are settled. But I, — I am on earth and I mean to continue living. You and I must come to a decision. One way or the other.

Genia (Staring at him). It is over — between us. *(About to go.)*

Mauer. Frau Genia, you mustn't go alone. Allow me to accompany you.

Genia (Nods). Thank you. Come.

MAUER *and* GENIA *leave.*

FRIEDRICH *still motionless as before.*

Erna (At the door. Without moving). What will you do?

Friedrich. However it turns out, conviction or release, — away, of course, from these parts... from the continent.

Erna. And — wherever you go Friedrich — I follow.

Friedrich. Thanks. Not accepted.

Erna. I feel it more than ever, Friedrich, — we belong to each other.

Friedrich. Wrong. You are under the influence of this thing now. Probably it even impresses you, that I... but that is an illusion. Everything is illusion Presently I shall snap to like a pocket knife. Over, Erna, between us too. You are twenty, you do not belong to me.

Erna (Always standing on the same spot). You are younger than all of us.

Friedrich. Hush! I know what youth is. It isn't an hour ago, that I saw it gleam and laugh in a cold, impudent eye. I know what youth is. And it won't do to serve every one as I served... Stay where you are, Erna, amuse yourself, and...

Erna (Listening). A wagon.

Friedrich (Remaining rigid). Percy.

Erna (A little nearer to him). Believe me, Friedrich, I love you. I belong to you.

Friedrich. I to no one on earth. No one. And don't want to.

A Child's Voice in the Garden. Mother! Father!

Friedrich. Percy! *(He moans faintly.)* Yes, Percy, I'm coming. Here I am. *(Exit rapidly to the veranda.)*

ERNA *remains standing.*

CURTAIN

Professor Bernhardi (1912)

A COMEDY IN FIVE ACTS

Translated by Hetty Landstone, 1927

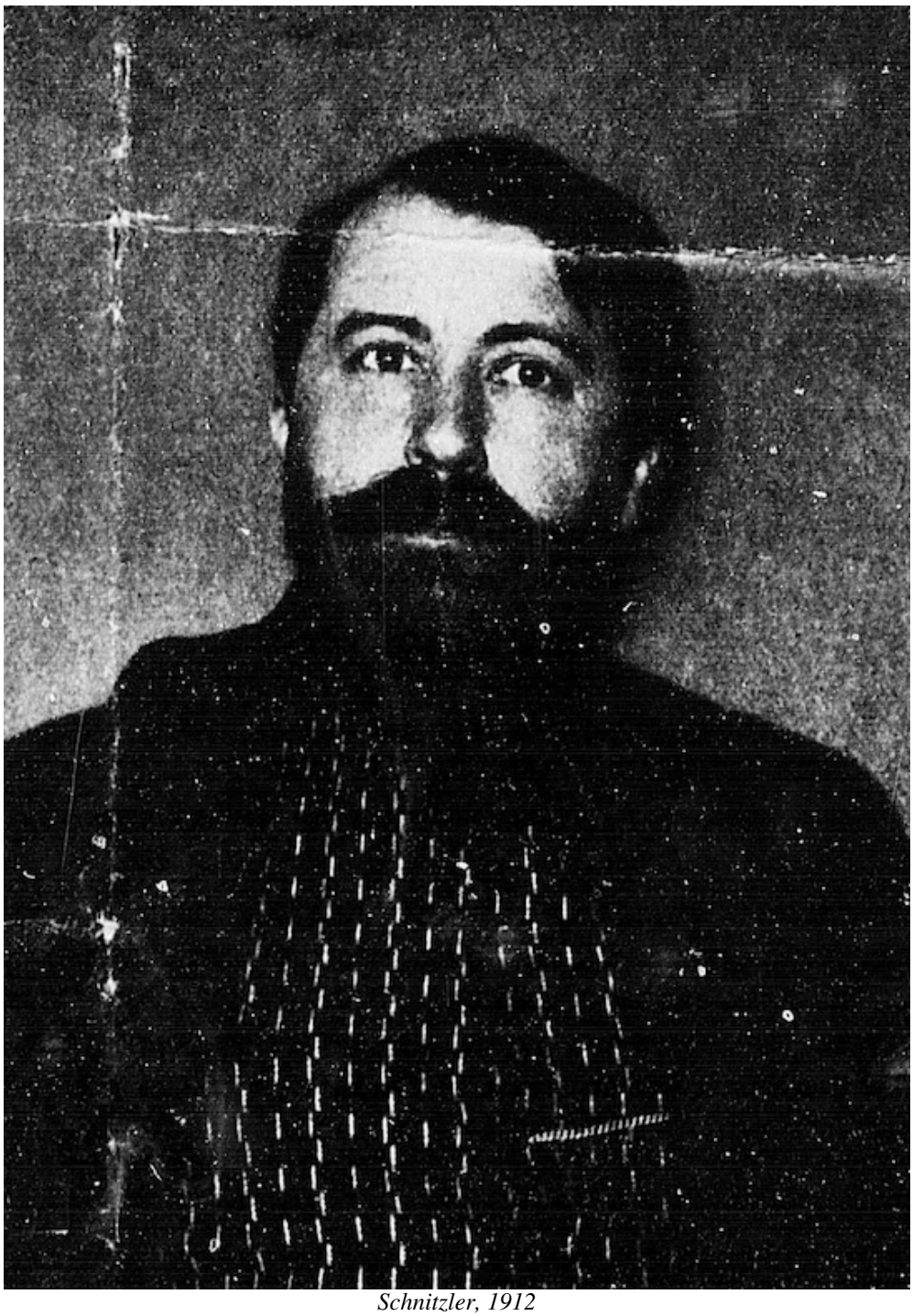
Professor Bernhardi, a play about a Jewish doctor who turns away a Catholic priest in order to spare a patient the realisation that she is on the point of death, is Schnitzler's only major dramatic work without a sexual theme. It premiered successfully on 28 November 1912 at the Kleines Theater in Berlin, with Bruno Decarli as Bernhardi and Alfred Abel as the chaplain.

One of the playwright's enduring masterpieces, *Professor Bernhardi* takes place in Vienna at the turn of the century. The protagonist is a Jewish physician and the director of the Elisabethinum, a clinic named in honour of Empress Elisabeth of Austria. A young woman, Philomena Bejer, in his care is dying of sepsis following an abortion. Unaware that she is on the brink of death, she is happy and believes herself to be recovering. Father Reder, a priest summoned by a nurse arrives to give the patient the last rites, but Bernhardi refuses him admission. He wants to spare her the anguish she would suffer when realising she is about to die. The priest argues that she must be absolved of sin, especially since she has undergone an abortion. While Bernhardi and Father Reder are arguing, the girl dies, having been told by the nurse that the priest arrived. Her death was hastened by the discovery that her condition was terminal and she died in a state of fear.

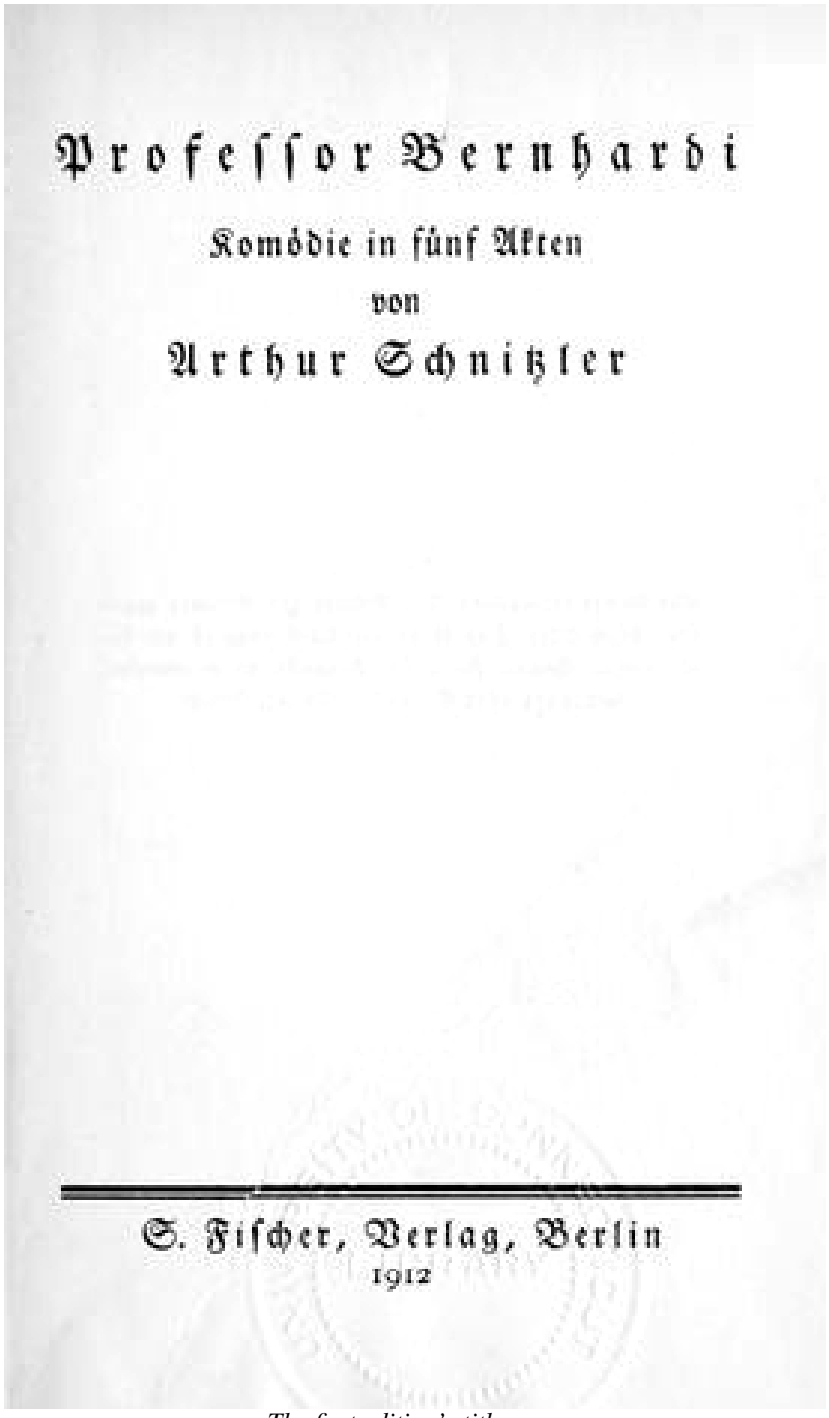
A press campaign causes public outcry. False testimony and fabrications about Bernhardi are printed across the city, revealing the endemic anti-Semitism of the time. As Bernhardi faces trial, Professor Ebenwald, a man with influence among corrupt judicial officers offers to pay a bribe so that Bernhardi can avoid trial. He will do this on condition that Bernhardi agrees to instate a Christian physician rather than Dr. Wenger, a Jewish physician Bernhardi had wanted to appoint based on merit…

For this play, Schnitzler used the Vienna General Polyclinic as a model for The Elisabethinum. As a young doctor, he had worked at the polyclinic, along with his father, Johann Schnitzler, who directed the hospital until his death in 1893. Also, Schnitzler used the German nationalist professor Julius Hochenegg as the model for Professor Ebenwald. Throughout the drama, his use of extensive dialogues addresses important themes such as anti-Semitism, problems of ethics and jurisprudence, as well as Catholicism. Primarily, however, the drama deals with navigating between ethics and what is feasible. Should one act individually in a right and ethical manner — as Bernhardi does — or should one pursue collective, grand goals? Schnitzler argues for the rejection of collective goals at the expense of personal ethics.

The play was banned in Austria until the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy in 1918. From the 1930's onward, it was rarely, if ever, performed, especially in Austria and the German Reich, and even after 1945 it was performed only rarely in German-speaking countries. In Vienna, since 1980, it has been interpreted as a metaphor for the decline of the West, which can be understood on the one hand as the disintegration of the Danube Monarchy, shaped by polyglot liberalism, German nationalism and clericalism, and on the other as the rise of political anti-Semitism — a breeding ground for Hitler's ideology.



Schnitzler, 1912



The first edition's title page

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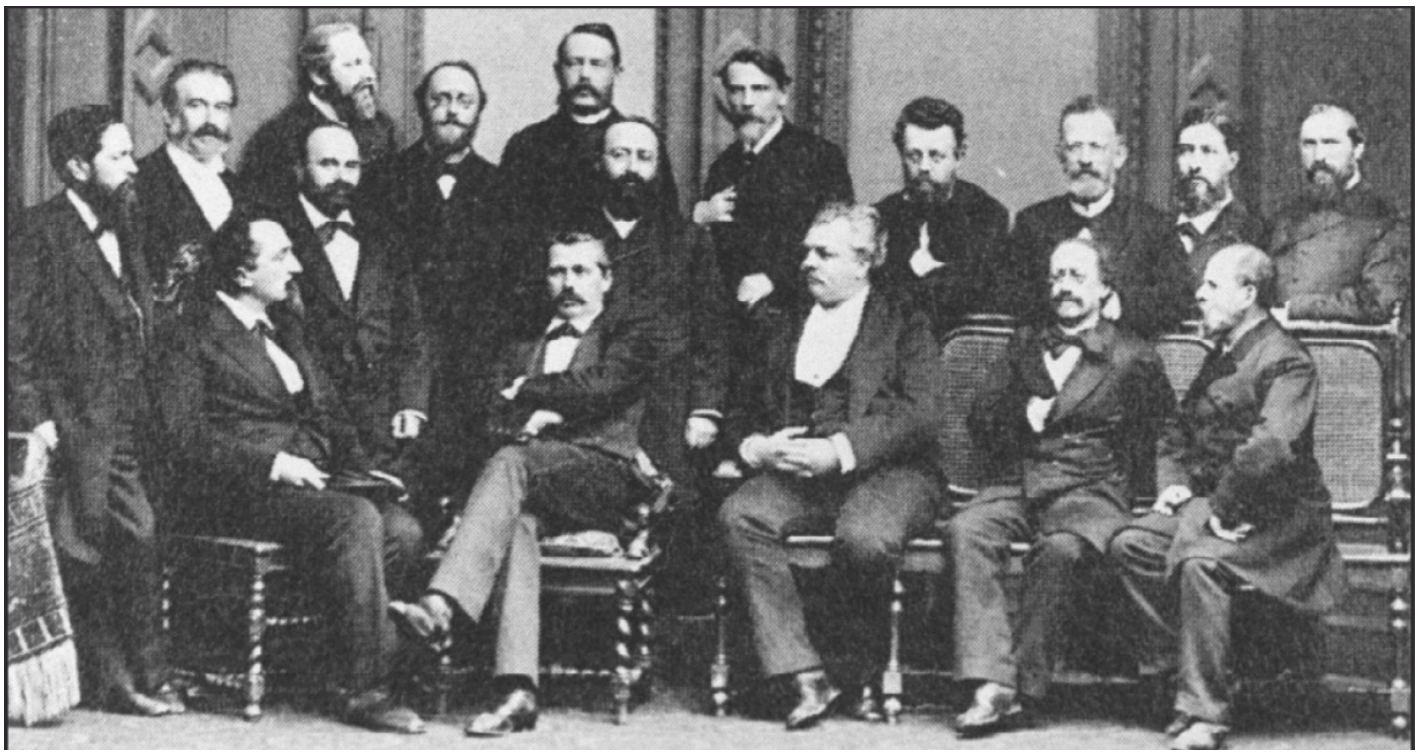
ACT I

ACT II

ACT III

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ACT V



The heads of departments at the Vienna General Polyclinic, c. 1885. Schnitzler's father is the second seated from the left.

NOTE

THIS PLAY WAS FIRST PRODUCED IN BERLIN UNDER THE MANAGEMENT OF BARNOWSKY ON NOVEMBER 28TH, 1912. IT HAS SINCE BEEN PRODUCED IN THE MAJORITY OF THE LARGER TOWNS OF GERMANY AND AUSTRIA, GENERALLY UNDER SEVERE CENSORSHIP RESTRICTIONS. IT HAS ALSO BEEN PLAYED IN HOLLAND, DENMARK, NORWAY, SWEDEN AND HUNGARY. SO FAR, IT HAS NOT BEEN PRODUCED IN ENGLAND OR AMERICA, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF A CHARACTER READING GIVEN AT THE LITTLE THEATRE, LONDON, IN FEBRUARY 1927, BY THE JEWISH DRAMA LEAGUE.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ



DR. BERNHARDI: — Specialist in Internal Diseases; Head of the Elizabeth Institute.

DR. EBENWALD: — Specialist in Surgery; second to Bernhardi

DR. CYPRIAN: — Specialist in nervous diseases

DR. P. PFLUGFELDER: Specialist in diseases of the eyes

DR. FILITZ: — Specialist in Gynæcology

DR. TUGENDVETTER: — Specialist in Dermatology

DR. LOEWENSTEIN: — Lecturer on infantile diseases

DR. SCHREIMANN: — Lecturer on diseases of the throat

DR. ADLER: — Lecturer — on pathological anatomy

DR. OSKAR BERNHARDI Assistant to Bernhardi

DR. KURT PFLUGFELDER Assistant to Bernhardi

DR. WENGER: — Assistant — to — Tugendvetter

HOCHROITZPOINTNER: — Medical student

SISTER LUDMILLA: — Nurse

PROFESSOR FLINT: — Minister of Education

COUNCILLOR WINKLER: On the staff of the Ministry of Education

FRANZ REDER: — Priest of the Church of St. Florian

DR. GOLDENTHAL: — Advocate

DR. FEUERMANN: — District doctor in Ober-Hollabrunn

KULKA: — A journalist

A MAN SERVANT AT BERNHARDI'S

A PORTER AT THE ELIZABETH INSTITUTE

A COMMISSIONAIRE AT THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

THE SCENE IS LAID IN VIENNA IN THE

YEAR 1900

ACT I

A FAIRLY LARGE lobby leading to a sick ward. On the right a door to the passage. At back a door to the ward. Left, a rather broad window. In the middle, a little to the left, a longish table, on which a thick journal is lying; beside this a folder containing histories of cases, documents and various papers. Near the entrance door coat-pegs. In the corner on the right an iron stove.

Near the door a wide étagère, on the top 'shelf a test-tube stand; by the side of it some medicine-bottles. On the lower shelves books and magazines. Each side of the middle door a closed cupboard. A white smock, a coat and hat, are hanging on the coat-pegs. Over the étagère hangs a rather faded photographic group of the medical staff. A few chairs according to requirements.

Sister Ludmilla (about 28, not too pretty, pale, with large, sometimes swimming, eyes) busy at the étagère when the curtain rises.

Hochroitzpointner comes in from the ward. (Young man aged 25, medium height, stout, small moustache, student's scar, pince-nez, pale, very sleek hair.)

HOCH. The Professor not here yet? They're taking their time down there to-day. *(At table, opening one of the folders.)* This is the third post-mortem in eight days. About enough for a ward of twenty beds. And to-morrow we shall have another one.

SISTER. Do you think so, Doctor? The sepsis case?

HOCH. Yes. By the way, has it been notified?

SISTER. Of course, Doctor.

HOCH. It's true that nothing could be proved.
But it was undoubtedly an illegal operation. Yes,
Sister, strange things happen in the world out there.
(He notices a half-open package lying on the table.)
Ah, here are the invitations to our Ball. *(Reads.)*
'Under the patronage of Duchess Stixenstein.'
Well, Sister, are you coming to the Ball, too?

SISTER *(smiling).* Oh hardly, Doctor.

HOCH. Why, is dancing forbidden?

SISTER. Oh no, Doctor. We are not a Religious
Order. Nothing is forbidden.

HOCH *(giving her a cheeky glance).* Really? Nothing at all?

SISTER. Still, it would hardly be seemly. Besides, we haven't the head for such things in our profession.

HOCH. Why not, indeed? What should we doctors say then? Look at Dr. Adler, for example. There you have a pathological anatomist — and a very jolly gentleman. Come to that, I'm never in better humour than in the dissecting-room.

Enter from the right Dr. Oskar Bernhardi, aged 25, very elegant, of amiable but somewhat diffident behaviour.

OSKAR. Good morning.

HOCH & SISTER. Good morning, Doctor.

OSKAR. Father will be here directly.

HOCH. So they're finished downstairs, Doctor? What conclusions did they arrive at, if one may ask?

OSKAR. The tumour originated in the kidney and was very sharply defined.

HOCH. So it would really have been possible to operate?

OSKAR. Yes, possible.

HOCH. If Professor Ebenwald had been of the same opinion —

OSKAR. Then we should have had the post-mortem eight days earlier. *(At table.)* Ah, here is the printed matter for our Ball. Why do they send all this stuff here...?

HOCH. The Ball of the Elizabeth Institute promises to be one of the most fashionable events of the season this year. It's in the papers already. I understand, Doctor, that you have dedicated a waltz to the Committee.

OSKAR *(deprecatingly).* It's nothing — *(Looking towards the ward.)* What's the news in there?

HOCH. The sepsis case won't last long.'

OSKAR. Ah yes.... *(Commiserating.)* Nothing could be done there.

HOCH. I gave her a camphor injection.

OSKAR. The art of prolonging life — that we understand to a T.

Enter from the right Dr. Bernhardi: aged over 50, beard sprinkled *with grey, straight hair, cut rather short, his bearing shows more of the man of the world than the student. With him enters Dr. Kurt Pflugfelder, his chief assistant, aged 27, moustache, pince-nez, lively and, at the same time, somewhat stern.*

Greetings are exchanged.

BERNH *(still at the door).* But — *Sister takes his overcoat, which he has hanging over his shoulder, and hangs it on a coat-peg.*

KURT. I can't help it, Professor. Dr. Adler *would* have been better pleased if Dr. Ebenwald's diagnosis had turned out to be right.

BERNH *(smiling).* Really, Dr. Pflugfelder. You suspect disloyalty everywhere. Where will you end up with all these suspicions?

HOCH. Good morning, Professor.

BERNH. Good morning.

HOCH. I have just heard from Dr. Oskar that we have been proved in the right.

BERNH. Yes, my colleague. But, at the same time,
'we' were proved in the wrong. Or are you no longer studying under Dr. Ebenwald?

OSKAR. Doctor Hochroitzpointner attends in nearly every section.

BERNH. You must have a big stock of loyalty on hand! *Hochroitzpointner purses his lips.*

BERNH *(laying his hand lightly on Hochroitzpointer's shoulders. Kindly)*. Well, what's the news?

HOCH. The sepsis case is going very badly.

BERNH. Is the poor girl still alive?

KURT. They might have kept her in the gynaecological section.

OSKAR. There happened to be no bed free the day before yesterday.

HOCH. And, what shall we give as the cause of death?

OSKAR. Blood-poisoning, of course.

HOCH. And the cause of the blood-poisoning? Because there was undoubtedly an illegal operation —

BERNH *(who has meanwhile signed some papers which the Sister placed in front of him).* We couldn't prove it. No injury could be definitely traced. The case has been notified, and that ends the matter, for us. And for the poor creature in there — it was ended from the first.
He gets up and moves towards the ward.

Enter Professor Ebenwald, a very tall slim man, aged about 40, overcoat hung round his shoulders, small beard, spectacles, speaks with a polished and somewhat exaggerated accent.

EBEN. Good morning. Have you seen — Oh, here you are, Chief.

BERNH. Good day, Doctor.

EBEN. Have you a minute to spare for me?

BERNH. Now, at once?

EBEN *(coming closer to him).* Yes, if possible. It is about the new appointment in the Tugendvetter section.

BERNH. Why such haste? If you would like to speak to me in half an hour's time in my office —

EBEN. Unfortunately I shall be lecturing then, Professor.

BERNH *(after a few minutes' consideration).* I shall soon be done in there. If you could wait here a little, Doctor.

EBEN. Certainly, certainly.

BERNH. *(to Oskar)* Have you given Dr. Hochroitzpointner the Department Journal?

OSKAR. Oh yes. *(Takes it out of his pocket)* Would you be so kind, doctor, as to enter it at once.

HOCH. Certainly.
Exit Bernhardi, Oskar, Kurt, Sister into the ward.
Ebenwald has gone to the window. Looks out.
Polishes his glasses.

HOCH *(officiously).* Won't you sit down, Professor?

EBEN. Don't let me disturb you, Hochroitzpointner. Well, how goes it?

HOCH *(getting up).* Thanks very much, Professor. As well as can be expected, a few weeks before the finals.

EBEN. Oh, you'll come to no harm — with your diligence.

HOCH. Yes, I feel pretty safe on the practical side. But the dull theory, Doctor!

EBEN. Is that the trouble? It was never my strong point, either. *(Coming closer to him.)* If it's any comfort to you, I even failed in physiology once. You see it's no particular hindrance to one's career. *Hochroitzpointner, who has sat down, laughs with pleasure.*

EBEN *(looking over his shoulder).* Department Journal?

HOCH. Yes, Professor.

EBEN. Great joy in Israel — eh?

HOCH *(doubtfully).* What do you mean, Professor?

EBEN. Well, because Bernhardi's Department triumphed.

HOCH. Oh, you mean, Professor, that the tumour was defined.

EBEN. And did actually originate in the kidney.

HOCH. But it was impossible to diagnose that with absolute certainty. It was, after all, if I may say so, mere guesswork.

EBEN. My dear man, guesswork!... How can you —? Intuition is the word! The diagnostic gift!

HOCH. Anyway, it would have been too late to operate.

EBEN. Out of the question. In the State Hospitals they can indulge in such experiments, but we, a comparatively young, so to say, private institute.... You know, my dear fellow, there are always cases where only the house-doctors are in favour of operating. Then, on the other hand, they always say that we are too ready with the knife — But go on writing.
Hochroitzpointner begins to write.

EBEN. Excuse my interrupting you again. Of course you attend at the Tugendvetter Section also?

HOCH. Yes, Professor.

EBEN. I should like to ask you something in confidence. How does Dr. Wenger lecture?

HOCH. Dr. Wenger?

EBEN. Well, yes, he often acts as substitute, doesn't he, when the old man has an urgent call to a hunting party, or to a prince with an infection?

HOCH. Yes, certainly, on those occasions, Dr. Wenger gives the lecture.

EBEN. Well, how does he get on?

HOCH *(dubiously).* On the whole, very well.

EBEN. Yes?

HOCH. Perhaps a little too — learned. But very much alive. Of course, I mustn't really take the liberty of discussing a future Chief —

EBEN. How so, future Chief? That's not so certain yet. There are others. And, anyway, this is only a private conversation. We might just as well be sitting opposite in the Riedhof and chatting. Speak up, man. What have you got against Dr. Wenger?
Vox populi, vox dei.

HOCH. Well, to tell the truth, I've no complaint against his lecturing, it's more his whole manner. You know, Professor, he is a bit ponderous in his manner.

EBEN. Aha! what you are driving at, my dear fellow, is probably identical with that which my cousin so aptly termed in Parliament recently 'The Jargon of the Soul'.

HOCH. That's good. Jargon of the Soul. *(Taking courage.)* But he has the other as well, Dr. Wenger.

EBEN. That makes no difference. We live, so to say, in an atmosphere of dialects.
Enter from the ward Bernhardi, Oskar, Kurt and Sister.

BERNH. Well, here I am, Professor.

Sister places some papers before him to be signed.

BERNH. What's this? Some more? Will you excuse me for another moment, Professor? — *(While signing.)* How astonishingly it always acts — *(To Ebenwald.)* You must know we have a bloodpoisoning case lying in there. Girl of eighteen. Quite conscious. Would like to get up and go for a walk. Thinks herself quite well. And the pulse already imperceptible. She may not last another hour.

EBEN *(professionally)*. This condition is frequently met with —

HOCH *(officiously).* Shall I give her another camphor injection?

BERNH *(looking at him quietly)*. You might have saved yourself the trouble of the previous one. *(Consolingly.)* All the same it is possible that you have given her the happiest hour of her life. Of course, I know that wasn't your intention.

HOCH *(irritated).* Why not, Chief? After all, one isn't a butcher?

BERNH. I don't remember ever having reproached you in that respect.

Glances exchanged between Hockroitzpointner and Ebenwald.

BERNH *(to the Sister.)* Has she any relations?

SISTER. No one has been here during the three days.

BERNH. Not her lover, either?

KURT. He'd take good care to keep away.

OSKAR. She hasn't even mentioned him. Possibly she is unaware of his name.

BERNH. And that's what they call love's ecstasy.
(To Ebenwald.) Well, I am at your service, Professor.

OSKAR. Excuse me, Father, will you come up here again? You know she begged you so earnestly to come.

BERNH. Yes, I'll look in presently.

Kurt has gone to the étagère and is busying himself with two test-tubes.
Oskar goes up to him. They talk a few minutes and then go into the ward together.

SISTER *(to Hockroitzpointner)*. I'll go across now and fetch His Reverence.

HOCH. Yes, go. And if you're too late, it won't much matter, either.
Exit Sister.

EBEN *(who has become very impatient)*. This is the point, Chief. I have had a letter from Professor Hill of Graz. He would be willing to stand as successor to Tugendvetter.

BERNH. Oh, he would be willing.

EBEN. Yes, Professor.

BERNH. Has anybody asked him?

EBEN. I took the liberty — as an old friend and fellow-student.

BERNH. Of course, you wrote in a private capacity?

EBEN. Naturally, Professor, since no official decision has been arrived at. All the same, I considered myself entitled to make the suggestion, especially as I know that Tugendvetter himself looks on Hill's candidature with favour.

BERNH *(rather sharply).* Professor Tugendvetter is to take up his new position at the State Hospital only at the beginning of the summer term. Our discussion of this affair — and, if I may be permitted the remark, your exchange of letters with Professor Hill — all seem somewhat premature. And there is all the less reason to be precipitate as Tugendvetter's assistant, Dr. Wenger, has several times shown his capacity to fill the position, at any rate temporarily, in a most capable manner.

EBEN. On principle, I must express my objection to provisional appointments.

Enter right, Tugendvetter, aged about 50, grey hair, side-whiskers, rather jovial in bearing, intentionally humorous, at the same time a little uncertain, looking for approbation; in appearance more like a banker than a scientist. Comes in with his hat on his head, which he only takes off after a little while.

TUGEND. Good morning. How do, Bernhardi! How do, Ebenwald! I have been looking for you upstairs, Bernhardi.

EBEN. Perhaps I am in the way —

TUGEND. Not at all. Not at all. No secrets.

BERNH. Well, what is it? You wish to speak to me?

TUGEND. It's like this. His Excellency the Minister of Education has asked me whether I would be in a position to take on the Clinic over the way, immediately.

BERNH. Immediately?

TUGEND. As quickly as possible.

BERNH. I thought it was arranged that Brunnleiter would carry on the Clinic until the beginning of the summer term.

TUGEND. Applied for leave. Poor devil! Six per cent sugar. Last days of Pompeii. Eh? *(He has a habit of putting a thoughtless questioning 'Eh?' after his sentences, especially after quotations.)*

BERNH. How do you know that? Is it authentic?

TUGEND. Authentic? Why, Flint himself told it me. You must know, I was at the Ministry yesterday. They are to build me a new pavilion. I shall get it, too. By the way, he wants to be remembered to you.

BERNH. Who wants to be remembered to me?

TUGEND. Flint. We talked a lot about you. He thinks very highly of you. He still remembers the time with pleasure when you were both assistants at Rappenweiler's. His own words. *Ipsissima verba.* What a career that is! The first time within memory, at any rate in Austria, that a Professor of a Clinic has become Minister of Education!

BERNH. He was always a good politician, your latest friend, Flint.

TUGEND. He takes a great interest in our — in your — no, for the present still in our Institute.

BERNH. That's no news to me. He did his best to ruin it once through excess of interest.

TUGEND. That wasn't he. That was the whole Collegiate. It was the battle of the old against the young. And, any way, all that is an old story. I assure you, Bernhardi, that he has feelings of the utmost sympathy towards the Institute.

BERNH. Which we can fortunately now dispense with, thank God.

TUGEND. 'Proud is the hidalgo'. Eh?

BERNH. Anyway, my only concern at present is with your attitude towards his inquiry.

TUGEND. I have no attitude *(humorously).* The decision remains with the Head. If you let me have your consent privately, then I will make my application to the Directorate. Or, do you want it in writing too, eh, Pedant?

BERNH. Of course we shall not keep you a day longer than you wish to stay. I promise you to arrange the matter with all possible speed. Fortunately, you have a very capable assistant, who can meanwhile carry on the Section, on your lines.

TUGEND. Oh yes, little Wenger. Smart boy. Yes. But you won't let him act as supply for any length of time?

EBEN. I have just ventured to remark that I consider provisional appointments in general an unsound proceeding, and I also took the liberty of informing the Professor of a letter from Professor Hill in Graz, who would be prepared —

TUGEND. Is that so? He's written to me as well.

BERNH. He seems to be a very active gentleman.

TUGEND *(with a short glance at Ebenwald).* Listen, Bernhardi, your Institution would make an excellent acquisition in Hill.

BERNH. Then he must have developed brilliantly in Graz. So long as he was in Vienna, he was considered a

very incompetent customer.

TUGEND. By whom?

BERNH. By you, for example. And we all know to whom he owed his call to Graz. Certain influences from above were responsible.

EBEN. Well, it's no disgrace to him, that he cured a Prince.

BERNH. I don't blame him on that account. But a whole career should not be dependent on one such instance. As regards his contributions to science —

TUGEND. Excuse me, as regards that I am the most competent to speak. He has published some excellent treatises.

BERNH. Maybe. In any case, I must draw the conclusion from all this, that you yourself would rather propose Hill as your successor than your assistant and pupil, Wenger.

TUGEND. Wenger is too young. I am convinced that he himself does not think of it.

BERNH. That would be wrong of him. His last work on serums attracted universal attention.

EBEN. Caused a sensation, you mean, Chief. That is not the same thing.

TUGEND. He has talent. Undoubtedly he has talent. But as regards the reliability of his experiments —

EBEN *(simply).* There are people who call him — shall we say? — a faddist —

TUGEND. That is going too far. Anyway, I cannot hinder anyone from handing in his application. Neither Hill nor Wenger.

BERNH. But I must remind you that you will have to decide for one or the other.

TUGEND. It surely doesn't depend on me? I don't appoint my successor.

BERNH. But you will take your share in the voting. The fate of your recent Section and of our Institute will still interest you sufficiently for that, I presume.

TUGEND. I should say so. That's not bad! Why, we founded it, didn't we, the Elizabeth Institute *(turning to Ebenwald)*, Bernhardi, Cyprian and I.

'Three horsemen through the gate came riding—'

Eh? How long ago is it now?

BERNH. It's fifteen years ago, my dear Tugendvetter.

TUGEND. Fifteen years. A nice time. By Jove, it will be a wrench for me. Listen, Bernhardi, wouldn't it be possible for me just at first, to begin over there and also put in attendances —?

BERNH. Out of the question. The day you take up your position over there, I shall, of course, promote your assistant provisionally.

EBEN. Then I must beg you to arrange for the discussion of a definite new appointment within the next few days.

BERNH. Why, if I may ask? That would almost seem as if we wanted to prevent Wenger from proving his worth during a few months' interim.

EBEN. I question whether the Elizabeth Institute was founded as a school for young lecturers.

BERNH. You can leave all the details safely in my hands, Professor Ebenwald. I think you will admit that so far nothing has been postponed unnecessarily in our Institute, and, on the other hand, nothing has been undertaken with careless precipitancy.

EBEN. Your suggestion that I am urging precipitancy, or even careless precipitancy, I beg to refute.

BERNH *(smiling).* I will make a note of it.

EBEN *(looking at the clock).* I must go to my section. Good day, gentlemen.

BERNH. And I must go to my office at last. *(Makes way for Ebenwald to pass him.)* If you please, Professor. Your students are waiting.

TUGEND. 'And in your band I'll make the third—' Eh? *(Meets Dr. Adler in the doorway.)* Good day.
Exit Ebenwald.

ADLER. Good morning.

BERNH. What brings you into the sphere of the living, Dr. Adler?

ADLER. I wanted to see something more about your case in the case-book, Chief.

BERNH. Everything is at your service.

ADLER. It's a pity, Chief, that you weren't down there just now. A case from the Cyprian Section. Just think, apart from the tabes which was diagnosed, there were beginnings of a tumour on the brain, of which no symptoms seem to have appeared in life.

BERNH. If you began to think of all the illnesses that lie in wait for people who, so to speak, don't live long enough to die of them, you might lose your faith in Providence.

OSKAR *(entering from ward. To Tugendvetter).* Good day, Professor.

TUGEND. How do, Oskar! Heard all about it — maker of music—' Quick Pulses' dedication waltz.

OSKAR. Oh but, Professor —

BERNH. What's this? You've composed something again, and I don't even know about it. *(Pulls his ear*

playfully.) Well, are you coming with us?

OSKAR. Yes, I'm going to the laboratory.

TUGEND. Fathers and sons —, eh?
Exit Tugendvetter, Bernhardi and Oskar. Enter Hochroitzpointner from the ward.

HOCH. Good day, Professor.

ADLER. How do, Doctor. I should be obliged if you would let me have another peep into the history of that case.

HOCH. Certainly, Professor. *(He takes the page out of a folder.)*

ADLER. Thank you, my dear Hochroitz — what —?

HOCH. Hochroitzpointner.

ADLER *(sitting at the table).* What a name you have!

HOCH. Don't you like it?

ADLER *(bending over case history).* Why, it's splendid. Makes one think of mountain peaks, glacier tours. You come from the Tyrol, don't you, Doctor?

HOCH. Yes, from Imst.

ADLER. Ah, Imst. I made a wonderful mountain tour from there when I was a student. To the Wetterfernkögel.

HOCH. They built a hut up there last year.

ADLER. They're building huts everywhere now.
(Bending over the sheet again.) No albumen the whole time.

HOCH. Absolutely none. He was examined every day.

KURT *(entering from the ward).* Yes, in the last few days albumen appeared. In considerable quantities, too.

HOCH. Oh yes, in the last three days, that's true.

ADLER. I see, it's entered here.

HOCH. Of course it's entered.

ADLER *(to Kurt).* And how is your father? He never comes down to see us now. *(Bending over The case history.)* So he was only lying eight days in your Section.

HOCH. Yes. Before that he was in Professor Ebenwald's section. But as it was an inoperable case —

ADLER. As a diagnostician, he's really in the first rank, your Chief, say what one will.

KURT. What does one say?

ADLER. Eh?

KURT. Well, you used the expression 'say what one will'.

ADLER *(rather sugary)*. Why do you pull me up so sharply, Doctor Pflugfelder? I simply meant that your chief strength lies in diagnosis, not in therapeutics. In that field you are too damned experimental, according to my humble opinion.

KURT. Well, Professor, what can we do where internal treatment is concerned? We must try new remedies if the old ones don't help.

ADLER. And to-morrow the new is the old again. You can't really help it. I also went through all that once. But it gets depressing sometimes to have to grope about in the dark so much. That was the reason I fled to pathological anatomy. There you are, master of the situation.

KURT. Excuse me, Professor, there's still ope over you.

ADLER. But he has no time to bother with us. He's too busy with his other faculty. *(Bending over the case history.)* X-Rays, too? Do you really think in such cases —

KURT. We feel bound to try everything, Professor. Especially where there's nothing more to be lost. This is in no way a fad or an advertising stunt, as is asserted in some quarters, and no blame should fall on the Professor for it.

ADLER. Why, who blames him? Certainly not I.

KURT. I know, Professor, not you. But there are people.

ADLER. Every man has his detractors.

KURT. And those who envy him.

ADLER. Naturally. Anyone who works and achieves. Many enemies — much honour. Bernhardi really can't complain. Practice in the highest circles and in certain others, where, fortunately, the emoluments are higher — Professor — Director of the Elizabeth Institute —

KURT. Well, who should it be if not he? He's had enough fights on behalf of the Institute.

ADLER. Certainly. Certainly. I should be the last to belittle his merits. And that he should have climbed so high in spite of present tendencies — I have a certain right to speak of it, as I myself have never made any secret of my Jewish origin, even though on my mother's side I come from an old burgher family of Vienna. I even had occasion in my student days to shed blood for the other side.

KURT. It is well known, Professor.

ADLER. It pleases me particularly, Doctor, to see that you give our Chief his full meed of appreciation.

KURT. Why does that please you particularly, Professor?

ADLER. You were a student under the German Nationalist colours.

KURT. And an anti-Semite. That's true, Professor. I'm still one. Only meanwhile in a general way I've also become an anti-Agrarian. I find that humanity makes a very poor show all-round, so I stick to the few exceptions, wherever I may find them.
Enter right Professor Cyprian; small elderly gentleman with long hair, still almost fair, rather sing-song, drawn out manner of speaking, drops unconsciously into lecturing manner, speaks as to an audience.

CYPRIAN. Good day, gentlemen. *(Greetings exchanged.)* Is Dr. Adler here, perhaps? Ah, here you are. I've been looking for you downstairs. Can I rely on it, Dr. Adler, that to-day's skull will not disappear again, as the one of the paralytic case did a little while ago?

ADLER. The commissionaire has been instructed, Professor —

CYPRIAN. The commissionaire is not to be found. No doubt in the public-house again. We shall still live to see the same thing occur that happened in Prague once, when I was working there under Henschel. We also had a drunkard as porter in a pathologicalanatomy institute. Every now and then the fellow swilled up all the spirit out of the specimen jars.

ADLER. So far, Professor, ours still prefers whisky.

CYPRIAN. Well, I should like to come down to-night. When will you be there?

ADLER. I generally work till midnight now.

CYPRIAN. Very well, then I'll come about ten o'clock.
Enter right Bernhardi and Oskar.

BERNH. Good morning. How are you, Cyprian. Are you looking for me, perhaps?

CYPRIAN. I really had something to talk to Adler about. But I am very pleased to meet you as well. I wanted to ask you when you could spare the time to come to the Ministry of Education with me?

BERNH. Why, what's the matter?
They are standing alone. Oskar has gone straight into the ward. The other doctors are standing talking apart.

CYPRIAN. Nothing special. But I think we ought to strike the iron while it's hot.

BERNH. I really don't understand you.

CYPRIAN. This is the favourable moment to obtain something for our Institute. When a doctor, a clinical Professor, is at the head of affairs, that is a constellation which we must utilize to the full.

BERNH. You are all extraordinarily optimistic with regard to Flint.

CYPRIAN. With good reason. I prophesied his career when we were both working together in the laboratory under Bruecke, nearly thirty years ago. I have already sketched out a memorandum. What we want first of all is a State Subvention, so that we should no longer be entirely dependent on the somewhat degrading method of soliciting private contributions. Further —

BERNH. You are forgetful in one particular. Flint is our most bitter opponent.

CYPRIAN. Oh, but that's all dead and done with. To-day his attitude towards the Elizabeth Institute is entirely sympathetic. Councillor Winkler mentioned it again to me yesterday. Quite of his own accord.

BERNH. Well —

OSKAR *(Coming out of the ward. Quickly to Bernhardt).* I think, father, if you want to speak to her again —

BERNH. Excuse me, my dear Cyprian. Perhaps you won't mind waiting for five minutes.

OSKAR *(to Cyprian).* A dying girl, Professor.

(Follows his father into the ward.)

KURT *(explanatory).* Septic case. Young girl. Abortus.

HOCH *(to Adler),* To-morrow, Professor.

CYPRIAN *(declaiming in monotonous tones).* When I was an assistant under Skoda, we had a Professor in the hospital, *nomina sunt odiosa*, who asked us — I mean us assistants — to call him, if possible, to every death-bed. According to his account, he was writing a psychology of last moments. I said at once to Bernitzer, who was co-assistant with me, that there was something queer about it. It wasn't the psychology that he cared about. Then, just fancy, one day, this Professor disappeared suddenly. He was a married man with three children. The next night a ragged fellow was found stabbed in a side street. Well, I expect you've guessed the point, gentlemen. It turned out that the Professor and the stabbed vagabond were one and the same person. For many years he had been leading a double life. In the day-time he was the busy physician; at night he was a frequenter of all sorts of low-down dens — a procurer —

Enter Priest, a young man, about 28, with clever energetic features. Sacristan remains standing at the door.

ADLER *(officiously).* Good day, your Reverence.

PRIEST. Good day, gentlemen. I hope I am not too late.

KURT. No, your Reverence. The Professor is just with the patient. *(Introduces himself.)* I am his assistant, Dr. Pflugfelder.

PRIEST. Then hope has not been altogether abandoned.

OSKAR *(coming out of the sick-room).* Good day, your Reverence.

KURT. Oh, yes, it has, it is quite a hopeless case.

OSKAR. Would your Reverence like to —

PRIEST. Perhaps I had better wait until the Professor has left the patient.

The Sacristan draws back, and the door shuts. Hochroitzpointner places a chair for the Priest.

PRIEST. Thank you. Thank you.
At first he will not sit down.

CYPRIAN. Unfortunately, your Reverence, we cannot limit our attendance to cases where we can still be of use. Sometimes we can only console.

KURT. And tell lies.

PRIEST *(Sits down),* That is a hard word, Doctor.

KURT. Your pardon, Reverence, this refers only to the medical profession. Anyway, that is sometimes the most difficult, and at the same time the noblest part of our work.
Bernhardi appears at door. Priest gets up. Sister enters behind Bernhardi.

BERNH *(somewhat taken aback).* Oh, your Reverence!

PRIEST. We relieve each other, Professor. *(Holds out his hand.)* I hope I shall find the patient still conscious.

BERNH. Yes. One might even say with heightened consciousness. *(Speaking more to the others.)* Absolute Euphoria has set in. *(Explaining to the Priest.)* She, so to speak, feels quite well.

PRIEST. That's pleasant hearing. Who knows — Quite recently I had the pleasure of meeting a young man hale and hearty in the street, who had received the last unction from me only a few weeks previously and had been quite prepared for death.

ADLER. Perhaps it was just your Reverence who gave him the strength and the courage to live.

BERNH *(to Adler).* His Reverence has misunderstood me, Doctor. *(To the Priest.)* What I meant was that the patient is quite unconscious of her condition. She is dying, but thinks herself cured.

PRIEST. Indeed?

BERNH. And it is almost to be feared that your appearance, your Reverence —

PRIEST. Have no fear for your patient, Professor. It is not my mission to pronounce a death sentence.

BERNH. Naturally, but all the same —

Sister, unnoticed by Bernhardi, goes into the ward in response to a hardly noticeable flicker of the eyelids on the Priest's part.

BERNH. That wouldn't mend matters. As I remarked before, your Reverence, the patient is absolutely unconscious of the nearness of the end. She expects anything rather than this visit. On the contrary, she is

under the happy illusion that, within the next hour, some one dear to her will appear to fetch her away and take her back to life and happiness. I think, your Reverence, it would be no good, I might even say, no God-given deed, to waken her from this last dream.

PRIEST *(after a slight hesitation, more firmly).* Is there any possibility, Professor, of my appearance causing an unfavourable turn —?

BERNH *(breaking in quickly).* It is quite possible that it might hasten the end, perhaps only by minutes, but still —

PRIEST. Again: Can the patient still be saved? Does my appearance constitute a danger in this sense? If so, I should, of course, be prepared to withdraw.

Adler nods his approval.

BERNH. She is beyond all earthly hope, there can be no doubt about that.

PRIEST. Then, Professor, I can see no reason —

BERNH. Excuse me, your Reverence, so far I am still acting in my capacity of physician. And one of my duties when nothing else remains to me, is to ensure as far as possible a happy death for my patient.

Cyprian shows impatience and irritation.

PRIEST. A happy death.... It is possible, Professor, that this conveys different meanings to our minds. And from what your Sister has told me, it appears that this patient is in greater need of Absolution than many another.

BERNH *(with an ironic smile).* Are we not all sinners, your Reverence?

PRIEST. This is hardly the place to discuss that, Professor. Who knows but that, at the bottom of her soul, which God alone can see, just in these last moments, there is the longing to free herself from sin by a death-bed confession.

BERNH. Must I repeat it once more, your Reverence? The patient does not know that the end is near. She is gay, happy, and — unrepentant.

PRIEST. All the greater would be my sin if I moved from this threshold without having ministered to the dying woman the consolations of our holy religion.

BERNH. From this sin God and every human judge would declare you absolved. *(In answer to the Priest's movement of impatience.)* Yes, your Reverence. For
I, as physician, cannot permit you to approach the bed of this patient.

PRIEST. I was called here. I must therefore beg —

BERNH. Not by my orders, your Reverence. And I can only repeat that I, as doctor, to whom the weal of his patient is entrusted until the last hour, must forbid you to cross that threshold.

PRIEST *(taking a step forward).* You forbid me?

BERNH *(touching his shoulder lightly).* Yes, your Reverence.

SISTER *(hurrying out of the ward).* Your Reverence —

BERNH. You have been in there?

SISTER. You will be too late, your Reverence.
Kurt hurries into the ward.

BERNH *(to the Sister),* You told the patient that his Reverence was here?

SISTER. Yes, Professor.

BERNH. I see. And — answer me quite quietly — how did the patient take it? Did she say anything? Speak up. Well?

SISTER. She said —

BERNH. Well?

SISTER. Of course she got a little bit of a shock.

BERNH *(not angrily).* Well, speak up, what did she say?

SISTER. 'Must I really die?'

KURT *(coming out of the ward).* All is over –

Short pause.

BERNH. Don't let it upset you, your Reverence. It was not your fault. You only meant to do your duty as I wished to do mine. I'm sorry enough that I was unsuccessful.

PRIEST. It is not for you, Professor, to grant me absolution. The poor creature in there died a sinner without the consolations of her religion and for that you are responsible.

BERNH. I accept the responsibility.

PRIEST. It remains to be seen, Professor, whether that will lie in your hands. Good day, gentlemen.
Exit.

The others remain moved and in some embarrassment.

BERNH. To-morrow, then, dear Doctor Adler, the post-mortem.

CYPRIAN *(to Bernhardi, inaudible to the others).* It was not right.

BERNH. How so, not right?

CYPRIAN. And besides, it will remain an isolated instance. You can't alter the principle.

BERNH. Alter the principle? I had no such intention.

ADLER. I should consider it dishonest on my part, Professor, if I did not speak up at this moment, to inform you that, in this matter, I am unable to stand formally on your side.

BERNH. And it would be disloyal on my part, Doctor, if I did not assure you that I might have known that beforehand.

Exit Cyprian and Adler.
Oskar bites his lip.

BERNH. Well, my son, it won't hurt your career, I hope.

OSKAR. Oh, but Father —

BERNH *(taking his arm affectionately)*. There. I didn't mean to offend you.

SISTER. Professor, I thought —

BERNH. Well, what did you think? But what's the use? It's all over now.

SISTER. You know, Professor, it's always — and *(pointing to Hochroitzpointner)* the Doctor —

HOCH. Well, of course, Chief, I didn't forbid her.

BERNH. Naturally, Doctor Hochroitzpointner. No doubt you attend the clerical section also?

HOCH. Professor, we live in a Christian State.

BERNH. Yes. *(Gives him a long look.)* The Lord forgive you — you know damned well what you do.
Exit with Kurt and Oskar.

HOCH. What an idea — to apologize! You only did your duty. Why, what's the matter with you?... Now you are starting to cry.... Don't get hysterical.

SISTER *(sobbing.)* But the Chief was so angry.

HOCH. Well, and what if he was angry — the Chief! He won't be *that* much longer! *This* will break his neck!

CURTAIN

ACT II



Professor Bernhardt's consulting-room. Right, main entrance. Left, door into adjoining room. A medicine chest left. Bookshelves take up the whole of the back wall, partly hung with green curtains. On the mantelpiece in the right-hand corner a Bust of Æsculapius, writing-table with chair. Close to writing-table, facing audience, a sofa. Chairs. On walls photographs of scientists.
Dr. Oskar Bernhardi sitting at writing-table, making notes in journal, then rings bell. Enter manservant.

OSKAR. Is there no one else waiting?

SERVANT. No, Doctor.

OSKAR. Then, I'll go out now. If father comes home — *(Bell rings.)* Oh, see who that is.
Exit Servant.

Oskar closes journal and puts writing-table in order.
Servant enters, bringing visiting-card.

OSKAR. Does he want to speak to me?

SERVANT. The gentleman asked first whether the Professor was at home. But —

OSKAR. He'll make do with me. Well, tell him to come in.

Exit Servant.
Enter Dr. Feuermann. Short young man. Blackbeard. Spectacles. Very excited. Hat in hand, overcoat, gloves. Oskar goes towards him.

FEUER. I don't know whether you still remember me —

OSKAR. Why, Feuermann! Of course I remember you quite well. *(Shakes hands with him).*

FEUER. All the same, it is eight years since —

OSKAR. Yes, indeed, how time flies. Well, won't you sit down. You wanted to see my father, didn't you?

FEUER. Well, yes —

OSKAR. I am his locum to-day. He has been summoned to Prince Konstantin at Baden.

FEUER. Your father has a fine practice.

OSKAR. Well, and how's the world treating you? I suppose you have not come here as a patient. Where is your practice?

FEUER. In Ober-Hollabrunn.

OSKAR. Oh yes, I remember. Well, what brings you here, then? Are you perhaps opening a Sanatorium or are you taking up a position somewhere in a Hydro, or are you making a health-resort of Ober-Hollabrunn?

FEUER. None of these things. It is a terrible story. Have you heard nothing yet?

Oskar shakes his head.

FEUER. I've already written to your father about my affair.

OSKAR. He gets so many letters.

FEUER. If you could put in a word for me —

OSKAR. What's it all about?

FEUER. You know me, Bernhardi. We studied together. You know I was never lacking in application or conscientiousness. A misfortune such as this may happen to anyone, who is forced to go into practice straight from the University. Not many are as fortunate as you, for instance.

OSKAR. Oh, there is a reverse side to every picture, even to being the son of a famous father.

FEUER. I beg your pardon, that is not what I meant. It is a great thing to be able to continue at the Clinics, to hear lectures, and imbibe wisdom at the bosom of the Alma Mater —

OSKAR *(becoming impatient)*. Well, tell me what actually happened.

FEUER. There is a charge of culpable negligence against me. It is a so-called technical lapse. I do not want to say that no blame at all attaches to me. If I had been able to practise another year or two at the gynaecological Clinic here, perhaps the woman would not have slipped through my fingers. You must imagine the thing in such a little hole, no assistance, no proper antiseptics. You have no idea of it here in your big towns. No one takes count of how many lives I have saved. If you once have a mishap, you may as well put a bullet through your brain.

OSKAR. Oh, but, Feuermann, you mustn't anticipate the worst at once. You have not been convicted yet. The experts will have their say.

FEUER. Yes; the experts. Well, that is why I want to see your father — he knows me, too; perhaps he may even remember me. You know I once attended a course of his on diseases of the heart.

OSKAR. Oh, that —

FEUER. I expect he is very friendly with Professor Filitz, who runs the gynaecological section at the Elizabeth Institute, and Filitz has been suggested as the expert for the case. And so I wanted to ask your father if he would not put in a word for me with Professor Filitz. Oh, I don't ask for any backstairs influence, but —

OSKAR. Yes, but, my dear Feuermann, I don't know whether my father's intervention — He is not on such good terms with Filitz, just now, as you seem to think.

FEUER. But your father is the head of the Elizabeth Institute.

OSKAR. Yes, but the conditions here are not so simple. I should have to tell you many a tale. The circumstances here would, no doubt, be as incomprehensible to you in Ober-Hollabrunn as yours are to us. There are currents, under-currents, and cross-currents; so, whether my father's intervention might not have exactly the opposite effect —

FEUER. Perhaps he could break a lance for me in another way. Your father writes so brilliantly. His articles on professional matters always hit the nail on the head. It would be a question of looking at my case from a general point of view. To point out the causes of the trouble. The miserable circumstances of so many young doctors; the difficulties of country practices; the enmities; the rivalries, and so on — Oh, that would be a theme for your father, and I could supply him with a wealth of material for it.

Enter Servant with visiting card.

OSKAR. Oh, Fil — *(He gets up),* I must ask you, Feuermann — you must excuse me — *(To Servant.)* Show him in.
(Exit Servant.)

FEUER. Did you not say Filitz?

OSKAR. I —

FEUER. Yes, you said it.

OSKAR. But you would not, just now — I would even ask you — This door here —

FEUER. Oh no, you cannot ask that of me. This is the finger of God.

Enter Filitz. Fair, good looking, age 40.

FILITZ. Good morning.

FEUER. Would you be so kind as to introduce me to the Professor, my dear fellow?

OSKAR *(with an embarrassed smile).* I expect the Professor wants to speak —

FEUER *(introduces himself).* I am Doctor Feuermann. You see, Professor, I look on it as a dispensation from Heaven that just at this moment — I have the luck — I have a practice in Ober-Hollabrunn — Doctor Feuermann — a charge has been brought against me.

FILITZ. Feuermann.... Oh yes, I know *(very amiably).* You sped a patient across the border — a schoolmaster's wife —

FEUER *(aghast).* Oh, sir, you are wrongly informed. If you only knew the details — if you would have the kindness to enter into the case fully — it was a series of unfortunate accidents.

FILITZ. Yes, that is always the way. But such accidents would not occur if the young men were not forced

out into practice minus all preparation. By the skin of their teeth they scrape through a few exams, and hope that God will do the rest, but sometimes He fails them — and with very good reason too!

FEUER. Oh but, Professor, if you will allow me. I passed all my exams with distinction, and I was obliged to go into practice, otherwise I should have starved. And that this poor woman bled to death — I venture to assert that the same thing might have happened to a Professor also.

FILITZ. There are all kinds of Professors.

FEUER. But if it had been a Professor he would not have been charged — it would have been the fathomless decree of the Almighty.

FILITZ. You think so? Oh, well *(stands facing him and stares at him fixedly)*. I suppose you are one of these young men who consider it their duty to their scientific status to pose as atheists.

FEUER. Oh, Professor, I assure you —

FILITZ. Just as you please, Doctor. But I assure you science and faith are wholly in accord. I would even formulate the opinion that science without faith will always remain a rather uncertain quantity, because, to begin with, it has no moral foundation — the ethical standpoint is lacking.

FEUER. Certainly, Professor. I beg to withdraw my previous —

FILITZ. Examples are not wanting of the outcome of agnostic arrogance. And I hope it won't be your ambition, Dr. Firestone —

FEUER *(deprecatingly.)* Feuermann.

FILITZ. To provide the gaping public with a fresh example. Anyway, I have the particulars of your case at home. Perhaps you might like to come and see me at eight o'clock to-morrow morning, when we could go into the matter further.

FEUER *(overcome by this new development)*. Oh, Professor, you would really allow me? I am immensely grateful to you. I will bring all the data — you must know my existence is at stake. I have a wife and two children. I should have to kill myself.

FILITZ. I should be obliged, Doctor, if you would leave such sentimental remarks out of the discussion. If you really have nothing to reproach yourself with, there is no need for such posing — at least so far as I'm concerned. *Au revoir,* Doctor!

OSKAR. You will excuse me from seeing you out, my dear Feuermann.

FEUER. Oh! Thank you, thank you.
Exit.

OSKAR. I must apologize to you in his name still, Professor, for his somewhat tactless remarks. You can understand that he was somewhat agitated.

FILITZ. A fellow-student of yours?

OSKAR. Yes, Professor. And I should like to remark now that he was a very industrious and conscientious student. I know that during the first few years he had to live on 30 or 40 kronen per month, which he earned by giving lessons.

FILITZ. That proves nothing, my dear fellow. My father was a millionaire, and I have become quite a capable man in spite of it. Oh well! Is your father out of town?

OSKAR. Only in Baden, Professor, with Prince Konstantin.

FILITZ. Ah!...

OSKAR. He really intended to be back in time for his evening consultation.

FILITZ *(looking at the clock)*. I am sorry I cannot wait much longer. Perhaps you will be so kind as to tell your father, what may be of some interest to you also, that to-day my wife was not received by the Duchess Stixenstein.

OSKAR *(not quite comprehending)*. Is that so? No doubt the Duchess was out.

FILITZ. My wife had a definite appointment for one o'clock, my dear sir, in her capacity as President of the Honorary Ball Committee to confer with the Duchess as Patroness and wife of the President of the Trustees' Committee. I think this incident speaks volumes. *(According to his habit he fixes Oskar with a glance.)*
Oskar looks rather embarrassed.
Enter Servant with card.

OSKAR. Excuse me, Professor. It is Professor Loewenstein.

FILITZ. Don't let me disturb you. Anyway, I must —

OSKAR *(to Servant)*. Ask him in.

Filitz makes a show of getting ready to leave.
Enter Loewenstein. Man about 40. Medium height.
Rather bustling, small eyes which he sometimes opens very wide. Wears spectacles. He has a habit of standing facing the person to whom he is speaking with his left shoulder lowered and knees slightly bent. Sometimes runs his hand through his hair.

LOEWEN. Good afternoon. Oh, Professor Filitz, are you just going? Wait a moment. This will interest you. Here you are, Oskar, read this. *(Gives him a letter.)* Excuse me, Professor Filitz. He must read it first as member of the Ball Committee. Duchess Stixenstein has thrown up the patronage of the Ball.

OSKAR *(glances through letter and hands it to Professor Filitz)*. Without stating any reasons.

LOEWEN. She found that unnecessary.

FILITZ. Especially as they are clear for all the world to see.

OSKAR. Do you mean to say — has this matter already become public? Within eight days?

LOEWEN. My dear Oskar, I never had a moment's doubt on that score. As soon as I heard of the scene I thought to myself: 'There's a tit-bit for certain folk. That will be boosted up.'

FILITZ. I beg your pardon, my dear Dr. Loewenstein, there's nothing boosted up in this. There was no need for any exaggeration. The plain facts of the case with all their stark details — But I prefer to express my opinions regarding this to my friend Bernhardi in person.

OSKAR. I suppose it is hardly necessary for me to remark, Professor, that in this matter I side with my father.

FILITZ. Naturally, naturally, that is your duty.

OSKAR. It is also my conviction, sir.

LOEWEN. And mine also, Professor. And here and now I should like to express my conviction that only bad feeling could attempt to make anything like a *cause célèbre* out of a perfectly innocent incident, and, to speak quite plainly, that no one would have made the attempt, if Bernhardi had not happened to be a Jew.

FILITZ. Ah, there you are back at your fixed idea. Perhaps you would like to say that I am an anti-Semite also? I, who always have at least one Jewish assistant. There is no anti-Semitism against decent Jews.

LOEWEN. Yes, yes, I was just saying —

FILITZ. If a Christian had behaved in the same way as Bernhardi, a case would also have been made out of it. You know that very well, my dear Loewenstein.

LOEWEN. Granted. Possibly. But then this Christian would have been backed up by thousands or hundreds of thousands, who now not only do not move a finger, but, on the contrary, will range themselves against Bernhardi.

FILITZ. Who are they?

LOEWEN. The German Nationalists and, of course, the Jews — a certain class, I mean, who miss no opportunity of sheltering themselves behind the governing powers.

FILITZ. If you will pardon me, my dear Loewenstein, this savours of persecution mania. And I should like to say quite clearly now, that it is just people like you, with their ridiculous smelling out of anti-Semitism, who are mainly responsible for the regrettable increase of the antagonism. And it would be a hundred times better —

Enter Bernhardt.

BERNH *(evidently in a good humour, greeting them with his light, ironical laugh, and holding out his hand).* Well, gentlemen, what's ado here? Are we burnt down? Or has some one left us a million?

OSKAR *(handing him the letter).* The Duchess has resigned from the patronage of our Ball.

BERNH *(glancing through the letter).* Well, then we must find another patroness. *(Jokingly to Oskar.)* Or are

you perhaps resigning your Presidency also, my son?

OSKAR *(offended).* Father —

LOEWEN. My dear Bernhardi, your son has just formally declared that, in this matter, he is entirely on your side.

BERNH *(stroking Oskar's hair).* Oh, certainly. You don't take it amiss I hope, Oskar. And as for you, Loewenstein, I don't need to ask at all. But what is the matter with you, Filitz? To look at you one would think that we had really been burnt down.

OSKAR. I must go now. *(Smiling.)* We have a meeting of the Ball Committee at six o'clock. Good day, Professor. Good-day, Doctor. *(Both hold out their hands to him.)* Oh yes, father, Dr. Feuermann was here. He says he wrote to you.

BERNH. So he did.

FILITZ. Don't worry yourselves at all about this Firestone. If it is at all possible to pull him through, I will do so *(with a triumphant look at Loewenstein)* although he is a Jew.

OSKAR. I really think, Professor, that, in this case, you are not espousing an unworthy —

FILITZ. Certainly. Certainly. Good day, my dear colleague.
Exit Oskar.

BERNH. Was it perhaps on account of this Feuermann —

FILITZ. Oh no, I only met him here by accident. I came here to inform you that this morning my wife was *not received* by the Duchess Stixenstein.

BERNH. Well?

FILITZ. Not received. The Duchess has not only thrown up the patronage, she has refused to receive my wife.

BERNH. Really! And is that why you come to me?

FILITZ. Don't play the innocent, my dear Bernhardi. You know very well that all this, insignificant in itself, is very symptomatic of the impression made in influential quarters by an incident not entirely unknown to you.

BERNH *(very cheerfully).* I, for my part, can report quite different symptoms from perhaps even more important quarters. I have just come from Prince Konstantin, who has naturally also heard of the affair, and who seems to take quite a different standpoint from that of Her Highness Duchess Stixenstein.

FILITZ. I beg of you, Bernhardi, don't quote Prince Konstantin to me. Being democratic is a form of sport to him, much as pigeon-shooting is to others of his class.

BERNH. All the same —

FILITZ. And, as far as I am concerned, the opinion of Prince Konstantin in this matter is quite immaterial to me. For my part, I take the liberty of holding an entirely different view of your action, that is to say, of your behaviour, in the matter in question.

BERNH. I see. Did your wife send you here to reprimand me?

FILITZ. I am not in any way entitled, neither does it enter my head — To cut a long story short, I am here to ask you what you intend to do to compensate my wife for the affront to which she has been subjected.

BERNH *(genuinely astonished)*. You don't seriously mean —
Enter Cyprian.

CYPRIAN. Good evening, gentlemen. Please excuse me for coming so — But I can imagine —
(Shakes hands all round)

BERNH. DO you perhaps also honour us because the Duchess Stixenstein has thrown up the patronage of the Ball?

CYPRIAN. The question of the Ball is a secondary matter.

FILITZ. I am sorry I have no time now. You must excuse me, Cyprian. But I must reiterate my question to you, Bernhardi, as to what satisfaction you intend to offer my wife for the insult from the Duchess Stixenstein?
Loewenstein looks at Cyprian.

BERNH *(very quietly)*. Tell your esteemed wife, my dear Filitz, that I had far too good an opinion of her to have assumed for a moment that she would let the closed drawing-room of a blue-blooded goose cause her a single pang.

FILITZ. Your mode of answering, at any rate, closes the matter for me. Good day, gentlemen.
Exit Filitz in haste.

CYPRIAN. You shouldn't have said that, Bernhardi.

LOEWEN. Why shouldn't he?

CYPRIAN. Apart from the fact that certain people should not be irritated unnecessarily, he is in the wrong. The Duchess is anything but a goose. As a matter of fact, she is a very clever person.

BERNH. Clever? Babette Stixenstein?

LOEWEN. She is narrow-minded, petty and bigoted.

CYPRIAN. You must know it would be heresy for the Duchess to enter into the problems and speculations which engross you. We have to understand these people: that is our duty. They *must not* understand us at all. That is their duty. Besides, this is only the beginning. Of course the Prince will take steps also — that is to

say, the Trustees will probably resign in a body.

LOEWEN. That would be monstrous.

BERNH *(who has been striding up and down, stands in front of Cyprian).* Excuse me, Cyprian. The Trustees' Committee consists of Prince Konstantin, Bishop Liebenberg, Duke Stixenstein, Bank Manager Veitsh and Councillor Winkler. And apart from the Duke, I guarantee —

CYPRIAN. Better not guarantee anything.

BERNH. I spoke to the Prince an hour ago.

CYPRIAN. I suppose he expressed his approval to you.

BERNH. He was kindness itself. And the fact that he sent for me just to-day speaks volumes in itself, for he is in perfect health, and it was obviously only to talk the matter over with me.

CYPRIAN. Did he start on the subject?

BERNH. Naturally.

LOEWEN. What did he say?

BERNH *(smiling, rather flattered).* That a hundred years ago, I should probably have been burnt at the stake.

CYPRIAN. And that you take as approval?

BERNH. You haven't heard yet what he added to it, 'I also, no doubt'.

LOEWEN. Ah!

CYPRIAN. Which does not hinder him from going regularly to Mass and voting against Divorce Reform in the House of Lords.

BERNH. There are official obligations.

CYPRIAN. Well, and didn't you inquire of the Prince at the same time how the other members of the Committee regard the matter?

BERNH. The Prince repeated a remark of the Bishop's to me without being asked.

LOEWEN. Well?

BERNH. 'I like that man.'

LOEWEN. You like the Bishop?

BERNH. No, he likes me.

CYPRIAN. Yes. That remark has been reported to me also, but the second part of it was not suppressed.

BERNH. The second part?

CYPRIAN. The complete speech of the Bishop's ran as follows: 'I rather like this Bernhardi, but he'll rue it.'

BERNH. And who told you this so exactly?

CYPRIAN. Councillor Winkler, from whose office I have just come, and who also hinted to me that the Trustees will resign.

BERNH. Oh, surely not. The Councillor himself is on the Trustees' Committee and he won't leave us in the lurch.

CYPRIAN. He would have no other choice. He can't remain as the only trustee if all the others resign.

BERNH. Why not? If he is the man I have always thought him —

LOEWEN. But, my dear fellow, a Councillor —

CYPRIAN. What use would it be if he alone took your part? Can you ask him for your sake —

BERNH. It is not a question of myself. You know that very well.

CYPRIAN. Very well, then. Not for your sake. You have said it yourself. It is a question of the Institute. Of our Institute. And if the Trustees go, it is all up with us.

BERNH. Oh, but surely —

LOEWEN. HOW do you make that out? Your Prince Konstantin and His Eminence have not distinguished themselves with their generosity.

CYPRIAN. But on the other hand, I can name you a dozen Jews who only contribute at all because a Prince and a Bishop are sitting on the Committee. And if we get no more money, we may as well shut up shop.

BERNH. And all this is to happen just because I did my duty as a doctor —

LOEWEN. It is monstrous, monstrous. Then let it go to pieces, our Institute. We shall found another one, a better one, without the Filitzes and the Ebenwalds and that clan. Oh, Bernhardi, I warned you against these people. But you are so trusting. Now perhaps you will be more wary.

CYPRIAN *(who has vainly tried to silence him).* Perhaps you will let me say a word. So far the Institute is still standing, and even the Committee are still with us. They have not resigned as yet. And perhaps a *modus* may still be found to prevent this painful occurrence —

BERNH. A *modus*?

CYPRIAN. Even the Councillor, who you will admit is a very clever, intelligent man, really well inclined towards you — is of the opinion —

BERNH. What opinion? Explain yourself, Cyprian —

CYPRIAN. That you would not commit yourself in the slightest degree — if, in some suitable manner —

LOEWEN *(breaking in.)* He is to apologize?

CYPRIAN. Who talks of apologizing? He is not to do penance in a hair shirt at the church door. He is not to forswear anything or declare allegiance to any dogma. It will be quite sufficient if you express your regret —

BERNH. I have nothing to regret.

LOEWEN. Quite the contrary.

CYPRIAN. Very well, then, not your regret. We won't quibble about words. But you can explain, without committing yourself in the slightest degree, that it was far from your intention to offend any religious feelings. After all, you really did not wish to do that.

BERNH. People know that quite well.

CYPRIAN. As if that were the point! You always talk as though you had to do with honest people only. Of course they know it quite well, and those who wish to twist the matter into a hangman's rope for you, know it the best of all. All the same, indications are not lacking that an attempt will be made to depict you as a wilful blasphemer and to charge you with having mocked at the Holy Sacrament.

BERNH. Surely not?

CYPRIAN. You may depend on it, and there will be nobody, absolutely nobody, to take your part.

BERNH. Nobody?

CYPRIAN. And you will have to carry the whole affair through, not only in face of the malicious howlings of your hereditary and newly acquired enemies, but also amidst the embarrassed silence and the discontented murmurs of the world at large and possibly even of your friends. And, of course, the reproof will not be lacking that just you should have avoided such an indiscretion, as in your case the fundamentals are missing which would make you capable of grasping the significance of the Catholic Sacrament.

BERNH. Yes, but tell me —

CYPRIAN. — All these things I have already heard said, my dear friend, by well-wishers, so-called intelligentsia. And from this you may form a conception of what you have to expect from the others.

LOEWEN. And on account of this rabble —

CYPRIAN. Don't always indulge in moral indignation. Yes, men are a rabble — but we have to reckon with that. And *(to Bernh)* as it is neither your intention nor your business to have dealings with this rabble, and as you cannot alter people or things one iota by your obstinacy, I advise you once more, most emphatically, to do your utmost to calm the threatening storm and, in the first instance, to make an explanation such as I suggest. The opportunity is ready to hand — to-morrow there is a meeting to discuss the new appointment in the Tugendvetter section.

BERNH. Ah yes, quite right, that would be a more important matter to talk about than all this damned —

CYPRIAN. — So I think. Nobody wants you to deny your convictions, Bernhardi. As I said before, a simple explanation will be sufficient.

BERNH. And you think that that ——

LOEWEN. Surely you won't do it, Bernhardi? If you do that, then I'll take it on myself. I'll shoulder the whole burden. As though I myself had —

CYPRIAN. Don't let this hot-head influence you, Bernhardi. Think it over carefully. Would you hesitate a moment to make such a small sacrifice of your vanity if it were a question of your son's career, for instance? And such an achievement as the Elizabeth Institute is, after all, nothing less than a child. And it is your achievement chiefly, though I stood side by side with you. Just think against what attacks you defended it. How you worked for it, fought for it.

BERNH *(walking up and dozen).* There's truth in that. They were years of struggle, especially at the beginning. It was no small matter — though I say it myself —

CYPRIAN. And now that we are so far out of the wood, is the Institute to be seriously imperilled, perhaps even ruined over such a bagatelle? No, Bernhardi, it must not be. You have better things to do than to wear out your strength in a fruitless and rather ridiculous struggle. First and foremost you are a physician. And one human life saved is worth more than a banner held on high.

LOEWEN. Sophistry.

CYPRIAN. We are at a turning-point. It only depends on you, Bernhardi, and our Institute may look forward to a brilliant future.
Bernhardi stands still in surprise.

CYPRIAN. You haven't heard the most important thing yet. I had an opportunity of speaking to Flint, too.

BERNH. About this matter?

CYPRIAN. No, not a word about that. I avoided it purposely, and so did he. I went to see him about a criminal-anthropological exhibition, which is to be held in the autumn. But of course we touched on the subject of the Elizabeth Institute, and I can assure you, Bernhardi, he has entirely altered his attitude towards us.

LOEWEN. Flint is an opportunist, a tub-thumper.

CYPRIAN. He has his faults, we all know that. But he is an administrative genius. He plans great reforms in all directions, especially in medical tuition and public hygiene. And for this — I am quoting his own words — he wants men, not puppets, men like you and me —

BERNH. Oh, he wants men, does he? Perhaps he believed it himself at the moment.

CYPRIAN. We know that he is easily inflamed. But the thing is to keep him warm. Then great things may be

achieved through him. And he really has the highest regard for you, Bernhardi. He was really moved when he talked of his time as assistant at Rappenweiler's, together with you. He is genuinely sorry that you have drifted apart, and he hopes — these are his own words — that on the pinnacle of life you may meet again. What occasion would there be for him to say such things if he did not mean them?

BERNH. Oh, he means them — at the moment. I know him well. Had you been there another few minutes he would have persuaded himself that I have always been his best friend. And in just the same way, I remember that, ten years ago, he called the Elizabeth Institute a plague-spot in the midst of the town, and us — an undesirable clique of over-ambitious young theorists.

CYPRIAN. But now he is older and more mature. To-day he knows what the Elizabeth Institute stands for, and we can look on him as a friend. Take my word for it, Bernhardi.

BERNH *(after a short pause.)* Anyway we have to meet again to-day, on account of that appointment.

CYPRIAN. Yes, of course, I will telephone Tugendvetter also.

LOEWEN. He won't come.

BERNH. Very well. If it suits you we'll meet at half-past nine at the Riedhof, and then we can take the opportunity of discussing the shape which the so-called explanation —

LOEWEN. Bernhardi!

BERNH. You see, I have no burning desire to pose as a hero. That I am the man to carry my point through in serious matters I have proved many a time, so perhaps we shall find a form of —

CYPRIAN. I have no misgivings on that score You are sure to find the right thing to say, in your usual manner, slightly ironical if you like, but only slightly. Even your smile might be enough, which need not be reported to the Duchess.

LOEWEN. Are you men?

CYPRIAN. Silence, Loewenstein; you are only the onlooker to whom no stake is too high.

LOEWEN. I am not an onlooker. I take my part in the game.

CYPRIAN. Good-bye, Bernhardi. Nine-thirty then. And you'll bring a rough draft.

BERNH. Yes, one that will not offend even your religious feelings, Loewenstein.

LOEWEN. Well, I like that!

Bernhardt shakes hands with both and they go out.
Bernhardt, alone, walks up and down a few times, then looks at the clock, shakes his head, takes out his notebook, puts it away again, with a gesture as much as to say 'That can wait Then he sits down at the writing-table, takes a sheet of paper out of a folder, begins to write, at first with a serious face, but soon smiles ironically and continues to write. Enter Servant.

Servant hands card.

BERNH *(taken aback, hesitates — then).* Ask him in.
Enter Ebenwald.

EBEN. Good evening.

BERNH *(goes towards him. Shakes hands).* Good evening, Colleague. To what do I owe this pleasure?

EBEN. If you have no objection, Chief, I should like, without any preamble —

BERNH. Certainly — take a seat.
Takes chair near writing-table. Bernhardi sits on revolving chair.

EBEN. I consider it my duty, Professor, to tell you that something is brewing against you, that is to say, against our Institute.

BERNH. Is that so? Well, I can reassure you there. The matter will be smoothed over.

EBEN. Which matter, if I may ask?

BERNH. I presume you are speaking of the impending resignation of the Trustees.

EBEN. The Trustees intend to resign? Well, that's pretty stiff; but this is the first I hear of it. Mine is a different affair. I have authentic information that a question will shortly be asked in Parliament about a matter not entirely unknown to you.

BERNH. Oh, then I think we may take it for granted that this step also will not be taken.

EBEN. Forgive me. Of course I am in the dark as to your plan for giving the unwelcome though not incomprehensible attitude of certain personages towards this lamentable incident, a favourable turn for us all. But I am afraid my optimism cannot rise to the hope that the danger of a question in Parliament can be averted from your — that is to say from our — heads in such an airy fashion.

BERNH. We must just wait and see.

EBEN. That's easily said. But you must know, Professor, that this concerns not only you, but our Institute.

BERNH. I know that quite well.

EBEN. And so, it would certainly be advisable to think out some means by which this interpellation might be averted.

BERNH. I am afraid that is not so simple. For the question will surely be asked out of conviction, in the name of the religion against which I am supposed to have offended. And what in the world could induce men of principle to swerve from a path which they conceive to be right and necessary?

EBEN. What could induce them to desist? Only one thing. If they could be made to see that no harm was meant, that you have no intention to take up — shall we say an anti-Catholic — position — at all costs —

BERNH. Do these people really need to be told that?

EBEN. No, not told; talking is easy. They must have proof.

BERNH. This becomes interesting. And what form is such a proof to take?

EBEN. We should need a concrete case which should give the indubitable lie to an anti-clerical tendency.

BERNH *(impatiently)*. Such a case would have to be expressly manufactured.

EBEN. Not at all. We have it at hand.

BERNH. How so?

EBEN. To-morrow, Professor, the appointment for the Tugendvetter Section is to be decided.

BERNH. Ah!...

EBEN *(coolly).* Yes. Two candidates are opposing each other.

BERNH *(very firmly).* One of whom is suited for the post and another who is not. I know of no other difference which could affect the question.

EBEN. It is quite possible that both might be suited for it, and I really do not know, Professor, whether you have made a sufficient study of dermatology to be in a position to —

BERNH. I have, of course, studied the theses of both candidates very carefully during the last few weeks. It is simply ridiculous, my dear man — and you know it as well as I do — to mention these two people in the same breath. Your Dr. Hill has written a few treatises, in very poor style moreover; while Wenger's writings, on the other hand, open up new lines of thought.

EBEN. But then again, many think that Hill's treatises are excellent and of great use to the practitioner, while Wenger's works, though undoubtedly clever, are thought by experts to be not too reliable. And as regards his personality, his overbearing and not too amiable manner wins him little sympathy, even from his friends. And in my opinion a doctor, especially the head of a department —

BERNH *(very impatient).* I can see no point in this discussion. The decisions rest with the majority, not with me.

EBEN. But you have the casting vote in the case of a tie. And an equal vote is fairly certain —

BERNH. How SO?

EBEN. In Wenger's favour — Cyprian, Loewenstein, Adler and of course Pflugfelder, the stiff-necked old Liberal —

BERNH. And Tugendvetter —

EBEN. That you don't believe yourself, Professor.

BERNH. Has he promised you his vote?

EBEN. There is no need for that. You know as well as I do, Professor, that he does not favour Wenger. And if his own teacher denies him his vote, I think, Professor, that might make even you a little doubtful —

BERNH *(striding up and down in his usual manner)*. You know perfectly well, Professor Ebenwald, why Tugendvetter is against his own pupil. Simply because he is afraid that he might cut against him in his practice. And you also know, as we all do, that Tugendvetter's latest treatises come from Wenger's pen.

EBEN. Would you not rather tell Tugendvetter this to his face, Professor?

BERNH. You may leave that to me. It has always been my custom to tell people straight to their face what I think of them, and to you, Professor Ebenwald, I say that you only stand up for Hill because he is — not a Jew.

EBEN *(very quietly)*. I should have just as much right, Professor, to retort that your championship of Wenger —

BERNH. You forget that three years ago I voted for you, Professor Ebenwald.

EBEN. But it went against the grain, didn't it? That's how it would be in my case with regard to Wenger. That's why I refuse to do it. One always rues such actions. And even if I held a higher opinion of Wenger than I do, I can assure you, Professor, that, in a Community, individual talent is not always the only consideration —

BERNH. No, it must be combined with character.

EBEN. I intended to say 'atmosphere'. And here we are back at our starting-point. It's really terrible that all personal questions in this country always end in the political arena. But we must resign ourselves to that. Look here, Professor, if Hill were an idiot I should, of course, not vote for him, nor expect it of you. But, after all, he cures the sick, quite as well as Wenger. And when you consider, Professor, that a stand made by you might avert all the unpleasant consequences, which the other affair — Of course, I can't guarantee anything. It's just an idea of mine.

BERNH. Ah!

EBEN. Naturally. And it would certainly be worth your while, Professor, to meditate on it *sine ira et studio*. We'll talk it over again to-morrow before the meeting.

BERNH. Quite superfluous.

EBEN. As you please, sir. But if I may be permitted an observation, you should not let false pride — Of course all this is strictly between ourselves.

BERNH. I have no occasion to beg for your discretion, Professor Ebenwald. Tell the gentlemen who sent you to me —

EBEN. Oh!

BERNH. — that that sort of bargain is not in my line and —

EBEN. Excuse me, no one sent me to you, and therefore I am not in a position to carry any messages. My visit to you, sir, was entirely unofficial. Let that be clear. I come neither as an emissary nor in my own interest, since anyway I have no intention of sharing any responsibility for your attitude towards his Reverence, but simply in the interests of our Institute, and in your interests, Professor. You have rejected my proffered friendship —

BERNH. And you depart as my enemy. So much the better. It is the more honest rôle.

EBEN. As you please, sir; I bid you good day.

BERNH. Good evening.
Accompanies him to the door. Exit Ebenwald.

Bernhardi, left alone, walks up and down once or twice, takes up the sheet of paper on which he had started to write, looks through it, then tears it across. Looks at the clock, and prepares to go out. Enter Servant.

BERNH. What is it now?
Servant hands him a card.

BERNH. What! In person? Is his Excellency here himself?

SERVANT. Yes, Professor.

BERNH. Ask him in.
Exit Servant.
Enter Flint immediately.
Flint, tall, slim, over fifty, with short clipped hair, small mutton-chop whiskers, his face deliberately non-expressive, very amiable, sometimes even cordial.

BERNH *(standing at the door).* Your Excellency?

FLINT *(extending his hand.).* It is a long time since we last saw each other, Bernhardi.

BERNH. Why, we met quite recently — at the Medical Conference.

FLINT. I mean privately like this.

BERNH. Yes, that's true. Won't you sit down?

FLINT. Thanks, thanks. *(He seats himself, and then Bernhardi sits down.)*

FLINT *(with intentional lightness).* You are surprised to see me here?

BERNH. It is an — unexpected pleasure, and I must not miss this opportunity of congratulating you upon your new honours.

FLINT. Honours. You know quite well that I do not regard my new position in that light. All the same I

accept your congratulations with quite especial pleasure, although you may imagine that I did not come here for the express purpose of receiving your good wishes in person.

BERNH. I am sure of that.

FLINT. Well, my dear Bernhardi, I need hardly tell you that I have no intention of looking upon my portfolio as a cushion for my head. I am resolved to make the most of my possibly limited term of office in order to push through all the reforms which, as you may remember, I have had at heart since my youth. Reforms in the sphere of medical education, social hygiene, general popular culture and so on. For these ends the worthy but somewhat bureaucratic gentlemen whom the State places at my disposal will not serve. For this I require a staff, a voluntary staff naturally, of independent and unprejudiced men. Of capable officials there is of course no lack, and especially in the Ministry of Education, but for the carrying out of my plans I require men. And I have come to ask you, Bernhardi, whether I may depend on you.

BERNH *(after a little hesitation)*. Perhaps you will be so good as to explain more precisely.

FLINT. More precisely? — h'm — well, of course I was prepared to find you stiff-necked.

BERNH. Oh no, not at all. I only want you to be more explicit. Otherwise it would be impossible for me; I should have to know in which sphere you require my co-operation *(with his usual ironical smile).* In that of medical education, social hygiene or popular culture — have I left out anything?

FLINT. Still unchanged. But just for this reason I am encouraged to set especial hopes on you. There may still be matters to clear up between us, although I hardly know —

BERNH *(gravely).* I will tell you, Flint. The friendship of youth — and what came of it.

FLINT *(cordially).* Well, what came of it, Bernhardi? We drifted apart with the years. That was force of circumstances, perhaps it was even due to the development of our respective characters.

BERNH. That's just what I think.

FLINT. You are surely not resentful, Bernhardi?

BERNH. I happen to have a very good memory.

FLINT. That may be a grave error, Bernhardi, if it clouds one's view of the present. I really thought that the battle-axe between us had been deeply buried and the years of combat forgotten —

BERNH. Combat? That is a noble word for a somewhat ignoble deed.

FLINT. Bernhardi!

BERNH. No, my friend, it was not right. And it would seem to me a betrayal of my own past, could I overlook it so easily. Oh, with what weapons you fought us, you and the other medicos! With what means you attempted to sap our young undertaking. What tales you invented in order to lower us in people's estimation, how you accused us and persecuted us! You asserted that we had founded our Institute in order to deprive the doctors of their fees, that we were a plague-spot in the town, that we wished to found a second

medical faculty —

FLINT *(interrupting him).* My dear Bernhardi, all these reproaches would, to a certain extent, apply to-day still, if it were not that the good work you have done in scientific and humanitarian fields has long outweighed the more negative side of your undertaking. We appreciated this, I the most of all, my dear Bernhardi, and for this reason, and this reason only, we have changed in our attitude towards you. And you must believe me when I say that to-day the Elizabeth Institute has no warmer friend than I. You know they were never personal motives that determined my attitude towards you, but my conviction only —

BERNH. Yes, that is a self-deception which one always practises in the growing bitterness of strife. Conviction!

FLINT. Excuse me, Bernhardi. We all have our faults. You, no doubt, as much as I. But if I can pride myself on anything at all, it is that I have never, even in the slightest degree, spoken or acted against my conviction.

BERNH. Are you quite sure of that?

FLINT. Bernhardi!

BERNH. Think seriously a moment.

FLINT *(rather uncertainly).* I may have erred during my life, as we all do, but against my conviction — never!

BERNH. Well, I know of a case where you quite palpably acted against your conviction.

FLINT. Now, really —

BERNH. And your action even resulted in the death of a man.

FLINT. Well, that is a bit strong. I must really insist now —

BERNH. Yes, yes. *(He goes up and down the room several times, then stands still suddenly, speaking very animatedly.)* We were assistants at that time at Rappenweiler's. A young man was lying ill at the Clinic, I can see him now. I even remember his name, — Engelbert Wagner, a Government clerk — about whom our Chief — and come to that all of us — had made a wrong diagnosis. When it came to the post-mortem, it was found that the patient might have been saved by a different *(antiluetic)* treatment. And as we stood there and the case became clear, you whispered to me, 'I knew it all the time'. Do you remember? You *knew* what the illness was, you had made the right diagnosis —

FLINT. I was the only one.

BERNH. Yes, you were the only one. But you took great care to let nothing transpire in the patient's lifetime. And why you refrained from speaking, is a question you can best answer yourself. I can hardly think it was from conviction.

FLINT. Great Scott, what a memory you have! I recall the case, and it is true that I held my peace about a treatment which I considered might be of service and ought to be tried. And I will confess to you quite openly

that I only kept silent so as not to offend Rappenweiler's susceptibilities, because, as you know, he could not bear to see his assistants cleverer than himself. And so your reproach that I sacrificed a human life is perhaps justified. Only in the motives, in the underlying motives which you ascribe to me, you are in error. This sacrifice had to be made, Bernhardi, for the sake of the hundreds of other human lives which were later to be entrusted to my skill. At that time I could not do entirely without Rappenweiler's support, and the professorship in Prague lay on the near horizon.

BERNH. You think Rappenweiler would have let you down if you —

FLINT. It is very probable. You have too high an opinion of humanity, Bernhardi. You have no idea how petty people are. Certainly it would not have cost me my career, but all the same it might have meant a set-back. And I was very anxious to advance, so as to give scope to my talents, which even you, Bernhardi, will not deny me. Therefore, my dear Bernhardi, I let the clerk Engelbert Wagner die, and I even feel incapable of remorse. For it is no great thing, Bernhardi, to act correctly, true to conviction if you like, in one single unimportant case; it is a question of being true to the guiding principle of one's whole life. It is indeed interesting that you should have raised poor Engelbert Wagner from out his grave, for now I see in a flash the deep underlying difference between us and — perhaps this will astonish you, Bernhardi — our capacity for complementing each other. Perhaps you, Bernhardi, more than I, are what is usually called a decent man. In any case, you are more sentimental; but whether a great cause could be better served by you than by me, seems very questionable. What you lack, Bernhardi, is an eye for the essential, without which all conviction is only pigheadedness. For it is not a question of being right in one single instance, but of one's influence upon a complete whole. And to give up the possibility of such activity for the somewhat meagre satisfaction of being in the right in one unimportant case, seems to me to be not only petty, but in the highest sense, immoral. Yes, indeed, my dear Bernhardi, immoral —

BERNH *(considering).* If I am not mistaken, you have now some quite definite instance in your mind.

FLINT. Yes. It came to me while I was speaking.

BERNH. Possibly we have quite inadvertently approached nearer to the actual purpose of your visit?

FLINT. Not the actual purpose, but all the same, one nearly allied.

BERNH. And for this purpose you endeavour —

FLINT. For this also. For I foresee with some certainty that the matter of which we are both now thinking will have very far-reaching effects. Of course, you did not foresee all this. According to your amiable, but sometimes unfortunate, qualities, you omitted, in the no doubt noble emotion of the moment, to look any further; and so you forgot one small matter in your behaviour towards the priest, namely, that we live in a Christian State. I can't see what there is to smile at.

BERNH. You will wonder again at my good memory. I remember an article that you wanted to write when in your student days. It was to have the title: 'Houses of Prayer — Houses of Healing'.

FLINT. H'm!

BERNH. You wanted to preach the necessity for building more hospitals instead of so many churches.

FLINT. Ah, one of the many articles that I wanted to write and never did.

BERNH. And never will.

FLINT. Not that one, at any rate. To-day, I know very well that they can exist side by side, the houses of prayer and the houses of healing, and that many an ill can be cured in the churches against which we in the hospitals, my dear Bernhardi, are at present powerless. But we don't want to lose ourselves in political discussion, do we?

BERNH. All the less as I can hardly hold my own with you in that field.

FLINT. That may be. Well then, let us confine ourselves to the case in point.

BERNH. Yes, let us do so. I am really curious to know what proposal his Excellency the Minister of Education and Religion wishes to make to me.

FLINT. Proposal? I have nothing definite. But I cannot conceal from you that the feeling against you on every side, wherever one keeps one's ears open, even in quarters where you would hardly suspect it, is very antagonistic, and for your sake and for that of your Institute, it must be regarded as very desirable that the whole affair might, as far as possible, be swept out of the way.

BERNH. No one desires it more than I do.

FLINT. Really?

BERNH. I can find a great many more important things to do than to occupy my time further with this matter.

FLINT. Are you in earnest?

BERNH. Can you doubt it? I can even tell you that, less than an hour ago, I consulted with Cyprian and Loewenstein about the desirability of making an explanation which should satisfy those gentry who are alleged to have been offended.

FLINT. Why, that would be — that would be splendid. But I fear that, under present conditions, that will hardly meet the case.

BERNH. How so? What else could I do?

FLINT. If you could — as, to my knowledge, no official complaint had yet been lodged, you would not commit yourself in the least, if through a personal visit to his Reverence —

BERNH. What's that?

FLINT. It would make an excellent impression. As you committed the, shall we say, indiscretion, of obstructing his Reverence with violence.

BERNH. With violence?

FLINT. Of course that is too strong a word. All the same, you pushed him away from the door, — at least so I have been told —

BERNH. What have you been told?

FLINT. — rather roughly.

BERNH. That's a lie. Surely you believe me —

FLINT. Then you did not push him away?

BERNH. I hardly touched him. Anyone who speaks of violence knows that he is telling a lie. Oh, I know who these people are. But they shall not — now I myself will —

FLINT. Calm yourself, Bernhardi. There is no official motion against you. As you have already decided to give an explanation, it would be quite simple to mention expressly, at the same time, that all these rumours —

BERNH. Excuse me, my dear Flint, you are under a misapprehension. I certainly had the idea of making an explanation at to-morrow's meeting, but since then circumstances have arisen which make such a step absolutely impossible.

FLINT. What does this mean? What circumstances?

BERNH. Compelling ones, you may believe me.

FLINT. And you cannot tell me anything more explicit? It would be of the greatest interest to me.

BERNH *(smiling again.)* Tell me, my dear Flint, have you really come here only to help me out of a difficulty?

FLINT. If it were immaterial to me how the matter might end for you — and for your Institute, I should certainly not need to trouble myself any further. To say the least of it, your actions have been so misguided, that I should have no uneasy conscience whatever about letting you settle your own hash, if it were not that I am sorry for you and for your Institute.

BERNH. So, to cut a long story short, you are anxious *for my sake* that I should save you the unpleasantness of an interpellation in Parliament.

FLINT. That is so. There would not be much credit in it. You certainly did not conduct yourself in a proper manner towards the Priest. And, as an honest man, I should have to admit that; even though, on the other hand, the purity of your motives, and your services to science —

BERNH. My dear Flint, I am afraid you do not realize how you are over-estimating your own authority.

FLINT. H'm!

BERNH. You obviously imagine that it lies within your powers to prevent such an interpellation.

FLINT. It lies with you. I can assure you of that.

BERN. Yes, with me! You are not aware with what truth you speak. With me alone! Half an hour ago I had it in my power to avert the danger of this interpellation from your head and mine —

FLINT. You had it —

BERNH. Yes. In the simplest way in the world. You know that a new appointment is to be made in our Tugendvetter Section. To-morrow we have a meeting. Had I pledged myself to give my casting vote in favour of Hill instead of Wenger, in the event of a tie, everything would have been in order.

FLINT. Pledged? How so? To whom?

BERNH. Ebenwald has just been here. He brought me this proposition.

FLINT. H'm! Do you really believe —?

BERNH. Anyway I got the impression that Ebenwald had full authority to drive this bargain, even though he denied it. Or perhaps it was only a trap for me, and the question would still have been asked, even if I had given my vote for Hill.

FLINT *(walking up and down).* Our colleague is very friendly with his cousin, Ebenwald the M.P. The latter is the leader of the Clerical Party, and if he wished it, no doubt the question would be withheld. I really believe that Ebenwald was acting squarely in this case. How did you meet his proposition?

BERNH. Flint!

FLINT. Ah well, of course you consider Wenger the more capable dermatologist.

BERNH. We both do. You know as well as I that Hill is a nonentity. And even were they equally qualified, Ebenwald's action would have made it impossible for me to vote for anyone but Wenger.

FLINT. Yes, Ebenwald has certainly not been very adroit in the matter.

BERNH. Not adroit —? And is that all you have to say? That is rather a mild expression, my dear Flint.

FLINT. My dear Bernhardi, in politics —

BERNH. What concern of mine are politics?

FLINT. They concern us all.

BERNH. And because such infamies are daily occurrences in your so-called politics, you think that I must accept this latest one with a smile, and give even a moment's consideration to this degrading bargain.

FLINT. It may not depend on you at all. There may not be an equal vote; Hill or Wenger may be elected independently of you.

BERNH. Oh, my dear Flint, things won't turn out so conveniently for you.

FLINT. For me? I think —

BERNH *(with heat),* Flint, even if you are a Cabinet Minister to-day, you are still above all a physician, a man of science, a man of honour. What were your own words: To keep faith with the Essential is what counts in life. Well, what is the essential here? Don't you see it yourself? That the best man should be appointed to our section, the one to whom it will open out the possibility of rendering true service to humanity and science. That is something to strive for! That is the essential. Not that you or I may be spared the inconvenience of an interpellation, to which, come to the worst, an answer might be found.

FLINT. H'm! Certainly I should not be at a loss for an answer.

BERNH. That is just what I think.

FLINT. Tell me, Bernhardi, would you be able to make a written explanation — I mean, could you write me a letter, setting out the whole matter briefly and concisely, so that, if necessary —

BERNH. If necessary?

FLINT. In any case, I should like to have it in black and white. There may be no need to read the letter. At first I might make guarded replies — if the question is asked, I mean. But if they would not let the matter rest then, then I would produce your letter.

(Makes a gesture as though drawing a letter from, his breast pocket.)

BERNH. No doubt your Parliamentary experience will guide you.

FLINT. Experience? So far, more in the nature of intuition. But I really think it would not come to that. I mean the reading of your letter. From my opening words, from the tones of my voice, they would recognize at once that I am keeping something in reserve. They would all see it. For I hold them in the hollow of my hand, Bernhardi. As soon as I begin to speak, I hold them all. Just as I held my audience at the clinics, so do I hold the members of Parliament. Recently, there was a little debate on the new school regulations. I only made a few casual remarks, but you can have no conception of the breathless silence in the House, Bernhardi. To tell the honest truth, I said nothing of any importance. But I had their ear at once. And that is the point. They listen to me. And when you have given a speaker your full attention, you can't believe him to be entirely in the wrong.

BERNH. Certainly, certainly.

FLINT. And, even though you may look on it as vanity, I am almost beginning to wish that the rascals may ask their question.

BERNH. Flint!

FLINT. For on this occasion one might digress into generalities. I see in this incident a symbol of our whole political situation.

BERNH. It is that, undoubtedly.

FLINT. I always have this experience — even with seemingly quite insignificant occurrences. Each becomes

a symbol to me. No doubt it is that which destines me for a political career.

BERNH. I am sure of it.

FLINT. — So, I think, this would be an opportunity for generalizing.

BERNH. — Aha! — Houses of Prayer, Houses of Healing.

FLINT. You smile. I am sorry mine is not a nature to treat such matters lightly.

BERNH. Well, my dear Flint, from all you have just been saying, one might almost get the impression that you wish to side with me in the matter.

FLINT. That is pretty obvious. I will make a confession. At first I was not so entirely — I still find your action towards the Priest blameworthy — but this Ebenwald business throws the whole matter into a different perspective. The most important thing now is that all this should be kept strictly private between us two. I mean that even your friends should hear nothing of this Ebenwald affair. For, if these people get wind of my intentions, they might even reconsider the matter and withdraw the interpellation. Of course you will keep a copy of this letter, but the contents remain a secret until I lay it on the table of the House. *(Makes a gesture without exaggeration.)*

BERNH. I am overjoyed that you are so — but — there is one other thing that you must consider. The party you are opposing is very strong, very ruthless; and it remains to be seen whether you can exist without its support.

FLINT. It must be put to the test.

BERNH. All the same, if you value your position more —

FLINT. Than you —?

BERNH. Than the truth — that is the only thing that counts — then it would be best to leave the matter alone, not to enter the arena for me —

FLINT. For you? I am not doing so. For truth, for justice rather.

BERNH. And are you quite sure, Flint, that this insignificant affair is worthy of your intervention?

FLINT. This insignificant affair? Bernhardi — don't you realize even now that higher issues are at stake than appear at the first glance? That, to a certain measure, this is the eternal strife 'twixt light and dark — But that sounds like conventional phrasing.

BERNH. A strife, my dear Flint, whose issue, under present conditions, is a somewhat doubtful one, and in which your whole ministerial magnificence —

FLINT. Let that be my affair. Come what may. I can imagine no more glorious death than for Right and Justice and in the service of one who — I confess it — until an hour ago, was my enemy.

BERNH. I was not your enemy. And in any case, I will gladly apologize if I have done you an injustice. But one thing I can tell you, Flint, even in case the matter does not end well for you, my conscience will not prick me in the least. For you *know* where right lies in this matter, and I decline in advance to offer you my admiration, should you do your duty.

FLINT. I don't wish it, Bernhardi. *(Holds out his hand).* Good-bye. *(Not too seriously.)* I have sought a man, I have found a man. *Au revoir!*

BERNH. *Au revoir,* Flint. *(Hesitatingly.)* I thank you.

FLINT. Oh! You must never do that. Our friendship must rest on a firmer foundation.
Exit.

BERNH *(stands still thoughtfully).* Well, we shall see.

CURTAIN

ACT III

Committee Room in Elizabeth Institute. Furnished in the usual manner. Long table centre covered with green baize, two windows towards centre back. Photographs of famous Doctors, a picture of Empress Elizabeth over entrance door left. It is evening, artificial lighting. Central hanging light with green shade, at first not fully turned on. Small table right against wall.

Hochroitzpointner sitting with large journal in front of him, copying from another page.

Enter Dr. Schreimann, Lecturer. He is tall, bald, black martial moustache, fringe on forehead, spectacles. Speaks in strikingly Austrian dialect, sometimes suddenly breaking into Jewish accent.

HOCH. Good morning, Capt — Doctor.

SCHREIM. Good morning. Had a good sleep after the Ball, Hochroitzpointner?

HOCH. I didn't go to bed at all, Doctor. It was not worth while any more.

SCHREIM *(as Hochroitzpointner is still standing at attention)*. No ceremony, man.

HOCH *(making himself comfortable)*. I danced until seven, at eight I was in the Internal Section, at ten at the Surgical, at twelve —

SCHREIM *(interrupting him, sits at table).* That will do. I know you are everywhere. And now you have copied out the Minutes of the last Meeting.

HOCH. Unfortunately I could not find time for it until now.

SCHREIM. Quite. Quite. It's not your job at all. And in my capacity as Minute Secretary I give you my best thanks. Did you find it quite easy to read it all? *(Sits next to him, reads Minutes, mumbling.)* Motion put to vote. Four votes for External Professor Hill of the Graz University; four for Dr. S. Wenger *(turning to Hochroitzpointner)* — Samuel —

HOCH. There is no need to write it out in full.

SCHREIM. I should like to know why not. My grandfather, for instance, was named Samuel and always wrote it in full. And my name is Siegfrid, and I always write it in full.

HOCH *(stupidly).* Yes, Captain!

SCHREIM. I'm not your Regimental M.O. now.
(Continues to read.) The Director made use of his statutory right to give the casting vote in the case of a tie and decided in favour of Dr. Wenger, whereby Doctor Wenger becomes head of the Department for Dermatology and Syphilis. *(After a short pause.)* Well, are you satisfied with your new Chief?

HOCH *(involuntarily clicking his heels together).* Certainly.

SCHREIM *(laughing, lays his hand on his shoulder).* Why, what are you doing, Hochroitzpointner? You're not my regimental pupil now.

HOCH. Worse luck, Doctor! Those were good times.

SCHREIM. Yes, we were all younger then. But tell me, Hochroitzpointner, as we are on the subject, when do you intend to take your finals?
Enter Ebenwald.

EBEN. Yes, that's what I'm always asking him.

HOCH. Good day, Professor.

EBEN. How do, Schreimann-SCHREIM. How d'you do!

EBEN. I'll tell you something, Hoch — you should take a holiday from all your various Sections and cram. You take me? — cram, so that you should really get finished some time. But what are you doing in the Committee-room?

SCHREIM. Dr. Hochroitzpointner has been so kind as to copy out the Minutes for me.

EBEN. Dear me! That too! I really don't know how the Institute could get on without Hochroitzpointner — and at the Ball last night you led the dances?

HOCH. Led and followed.

SCHREIM. He hasn't been to bed at all.

EBEN. Ah, these young people. Well, what was it like?

HOCH. Crowded out. Very lively.

EBEN *(to Hoch.)* Do you know where you danced all night, Hochroitzpointner? On the crust of a volcano.

HOCH. Well, it *was* hot, Professor.

EBEN *(laughs).* Well now! Take a holiday, pass your exams. and give up dancing on volcanoes. Even on extinct ones! Good-bye. *(Holds out his hand in dismissal.)*

Schreiman does the same.

Hoch again clicks his heels together.

EBEN. Like a lieutenant.

SCHREIM. I have just told him of it.

Exit Hochroitzpointner.

EBEN. I hear that his Excellency the Minister of Education was also there.

SCHREIM. Yes, and was talking to Bernhardi at least half an hour.

EBEN. It is most strange.

SCHREIM. Why not? At a Ball?

EBEN. But he must know that the Trustees have resigned.

SCHREIM. All the same, even one of the Trustees was at the Ball.

EBEN. Who?

SCHREIM. Councillor Winkler.

EBEN. He is always a free lance.

SCHREIM. Come to that, the matter is not official yet.

EBEN. As good as official. The Meeting to-day has no doubt been called on account of the resignation. Well — *(hesitatingly)* can I rely on you, Schreimann?

SCHREIM *(airily)*. I take the liberty of considering this question rather extraordinary.

EBEN. Don't be foolish. We are not students now.

SCHREIM. You can always rely on me when I am in agreement with you. And as, fortunately, this is generally the case —

EBEN. But there might be a question where to agree with me would cause you some misgivings.

SCHREIM. I have already told you once, my dear Ebenwald, that, in my opinion, this whole affair is not to be judged from any sectarian or religious standpoint, but is to be looked on more as a question of tact. So, even if I were a Nationalist Jew, I would side against Bernhardi in this case. And permit me to remark, once more, that I am as much a German as you. And I can assure you it takes more courage at the present time for a man of my origin to declare himself a German and a Christian than to remain what he was at birth. I should have had an easier time as a Zionist.

EBEN. Quite likely. You could have been sure of a Professorship in Jerusalem, at any rate.

SCHREIM. That's a stupid joke.

EBEN. Well, Schreimann, you know my feelings towards you. But, on the other hand, we live in such muddled times — and in such a muddled land —

SCHREIM. Don't dig up that old business of the anonymous letters.

EBEN. Ah, you still remember that? As a matter of fact they were not anonymous at all. They were signed in full by good old friends of our student days. They were naturally surprised that I championed you so warmly. You must not forget, my dear Schreimann, that I was a leader of the German Nationalist Party at the

University of the strictest type. And you know what that means — Watch on the Rhine — Bismarck's Oak — Waidhof Resolution. No satisfaction given to Jews or anyone of Jewish extraction —

SCHREIM. It had to be given sometimes, though, in spite of the strictest observance. I received this scar as a Jew.

EBEN. Well, don't we live in muddled times? You are more proud to-day of your Jewish scar than of all your Germanism.

Enter Professor Pflugfelder. Looks like a scientist, wears spectacles.

PFLUG. Good day, gentlemen. Have you heard that the Committee has resigned?

EBEN. That is why we are here, Professor.

PFLUG. Well, what do you say to it?

EBEN. You seem to be surprised. I thought everyone was prepared for it.

PFLUG. Surprised? Not at all. I may tell you I have long ceased to be astonished at anything. But I retain the power to be disgusted, unfortunately. I am steeped in disgust.

SCHREIM. Disgust?

PFLUG. Surely you will agree, gentlemen, that the agitation which is being worked up against Bernhardi is devoid of all justification.

EBEN. I know of no agitation.

PFLUG. Oh, you know of nothing? I see. I see. And that your cousin, Ottokar Ebenwald, is the leading spirit, is also news to you?

EBEN. I must really ask you —

PFLUG. But of course I must not identify you with your cousin. You would rightly disclaim all connection. For it happens, just at this juncture, that your cousin, who began so proudly as a German Nationalist, now simply lends himself to do the jobs of the Clerical Party. And you are no Clerical, Ebenwald. You are a German, are you not? An old German student. And what are the German virtues, Ebenwald? Courage, loyalty, conviction. Have I left out one? No matter. These are enough to go on with. And, therefore, I hope you are in agreement with me. We will make a solemn demonstration of loyalty to-day to our Bernhardi.

EBEN. Demonstration? What about? What has happened to him? Nothing so far except that the Trustees have resigned. And we can close down because no more money is forthcoming: whether this is quite the right occasion to accord an ovation to the Director who has brought us to this position through his not very tactful behaviour —

PFLUG. Ah yes — I see. Well, you are as you were made, Ebenwald. All the same, if I needed an operation, I would have none but you. For there you beat them all. But what about you, Schreimann? You are silent? Also

against Bernhardi? Also indignant because he begged the Priest to let a poor sick creature die in peace? Quite natural. Quite natural. Such newly-acquired religious feelings must be treated with respect.

EBEN *(quietly).* Don't let him work on you, Schreimann.

SCHREIM *(very quietly).* I have just been saying to my friend Ebenwald, Professor, that not my religious feeling, but my good taste has been offended. For I must confess that I consider a sickroom the wrong place for politics.

PFLUG. Politics! Bernhardi and politics! You don't ask me to believe that you yourself think that. Well, really that is —
Enter Filitz. Greetings exchanged.

FILITZ. Good evening, gentlemen. I will tell you at once what I intend to do. You can please yourselves. For my part I am going to follow the good example of the Trustees and resign.

EBENWALD. What?

PFLUG. Eh!

FILITZ. I cannot see what other course is open to an honest man if he does not wish directly to associate himself with the behaviour of our Director, not to stigmatize it further at the moment —

EBEN. Excuse me, Professor, I don't agree with you at all. There must certainly be some other way of showing that we do not identify ourselves with our Director. We must not leave the Institute in the lurch, certainly not just at this moment. On the contrary, we must try and influence the Committee to withdraw the resignation.

FILITZ. That will never happen, so long as Bernhardi is at the head.

SCHREIM. Quite so — so long as he is at the head.

FILITZ. So long as —

PFLUG. Oh indeed, gentlemen, so that is what you are driving at. But that is beyond all —

Enter Adler.

ADLER. Good evening, gentlemen. Have you seen it?

EBEN. Seen what?

ADLER. The Interpellation.

SCHREIM. In the Affaire Bernhardi?

FILITZ. Has it been already?

ADLER. It is in all the evening papers.

EBEN *(rings bell.)* We haven't seen anything. *(To Filitz.)* I thought it was to-morrow only.

SCHREIM. You see we doctors have no time to sit in cafés in the afternoon.
Enter Servant.

EBEN. Run over to the newsagents and get an evening paper.

FILITZ. Bring three.

SCHREIM. Six!

EBEN *(to Servant)*. Bring a dozen while you are about it. But be quick.
Exit Servant.

SCHREIM *(to Adler.)* Was the question worded very strongly?

PFLUG. Is there no one here who knew the wording beforehand?
Enter Dr. Wenger. Small, crushed, uncertain, but sometimes blustering.

WENGER. Good evening, gentlemen.

SCHREIM. Hand it over, Dr. Wenger. *(Draws evening paper from his breast pocket.)* He has one.

WENGER. Oh, but Doctor —

EBEN. It was nice of you to bring it in with you.

WENGER. What have I brought with me? Oh, I see. Is it the custom for the Benjamin always to bring the evening paper to the meetings'?

EBEN. Here it is.
All the others, except Adler and Wenger, try to see the paper over Ebenwald's shoulder.

ADLER *(to Wenger).* Well, what do you think of it?

WENGER. What can I say? I understand nothing of politics. And I was not present.

SCHREIM *(to Ebenwald).* No one can see anything like this. Read it out.

EBEN. Well, gentlemen, the question ran as follows:
'The undersigned consider it their duty—'

PFLUG. You are quite breathless. Let Professor Filitz read. He is sonorous and rhetorical and has the deep tones of conviction.

EBEN. So have I, but no doubt Professor Filitz reads better than I. If you please.

FILITZ *(reading).* 'The undersigned consider it their duty to bring to the notice of the Government the following incident which took place in the Elizabeth Institute on the — And so on and so forth.

His Reverence Frank Rider, Priest at the Church of St. Florian, was called to the death-bed of Philomena 84 Beier, spinster, by Hospital Sister Ludmilla, to administer the Holy Sacrament and last unction.

In the entrance chamber to the ward his Reverence found a number of doctors, among them Professor Bernhardi, head of the Department in question, Director of the Institute, who harshly requested his Reverence to desist from his intention, on the grounds that the dying woman might suffer in health through the excitement.'

PFLUG. No, no!

THE OTHERS. Oh!...

FILITZ *(continuing to read).* 'Professor Bernhardi, as a member of the Mosaic religion, was informed by his Reverence that he had come in fulfilment of a holy duty which, in this case, was all the more urgent as the patient's illness was the result of a criminal action on her part, whereupon Professor Bernhardi sneeringly insisted upon his rights as manager of the premises, which are naturally built out of funds provided by noble contributors. As his Reverence then tried to enter the sick-ward, waving off further discussion, Professor Bernhardi obstructed the door, and at the instant when his Reverence seized the handle to enter the sickroom for the performance of his holy duty, Professor Bernhardi gave him a push—'

ADLER. Absolutely untrue.

PFLUG. Infamous.

SCHREIM. Why, were you there?

FILITZ. Does the push make any difference?

EBEN. There are witnesses.

PFLUG. I know your witnesses.

ADLER. I was there too.

PFLUG. But your evidence was not taken.

WENGER. Evidence?

PFLUG. Yes, in the Commission. Is it possible that you have not heard of the commission, Professor Ebenwald?

SCHREIM. Read on!

FILITZ *(reads).* 'During this scene in the antechamber, the patient passed away without having received the consolations of her religion, which, according to the testimony of Sister Ludmilla, she urgently desired. In bringing this case to the notice of the Government, we ask the Government and especially his Excellency the Minister of Education and Religion, what measures he intends to take to give satisfaction to the Christian population of Vienna, who have been offended in their deepest religious feelings. Further, what steps his

Excellency intends to take to prevent the recurrence of such preposterous incidents, and finally whether in future, when public positions are to be filled, his Excellency would not consider it advisable, having regard to this incident, to exclude persons who, through origin, education and character are not in a position to have the necessary understanding for the religious feelings of the indigenous Christian populace. Signed—'

Excitement.

EBEN. Now we are in a fix.

WENGER. How so we? Not a word has been said against the Institute.

SCHREIM. That's true.

EBEN. Bravo, Wenger!

WENGER *(encouraged).* The Elizabeth Institute is without reproach or stain.

PFLUG. And the Director?

WENGER. He too, of course, if he can rebut the aspersions contained in the interpellation, of which I, naturally, have no doubt.

PFLUG. Aspersions? You call these aspersions? But, my dear friend, this question — do you really need to be told that — that this interpellation is nothing less than a political move of the combined Clerical and anti-Semitic parties?

FILITZ. Stuff and nonsense!

EBEN. The old war-horse!

WENGER. Excuse me, I recognize no political or national differences. I am a man of science. I abhor —

SCHREIM. We all abhor —
Enter Bernhardi and Cyprian.

BERNH *(very expansive, his manner of speaking even more humorous and ironical than usual, but not without embarrassment. He takes the evening papers from the hand of the Servant who opens the door for him.)* Good evening, gentlemen. Here, please help yourselves. I must apologize for being late, but hope you all found sufficient entertainment in my absence. *Greetings all round. Bernhardi at once sits at head of table, the others take their various seats; some smoke.*

BERNH. I declare the Meeting open. Before starting on the agenda, I wish, in the name of the Elizabeth Institute, to offer a hearty welcome to our new Member, who is, for the first time, attending a Meeting of our Committee, and that an extraordinary one. Let me express the hope, at the same time, that Dr. Wenger will feel at ease in our midst and find further opportunity in his new and more responsible position, to demonstrate his proved devotion to duty, to develop his talents and to become that which we all are, an ornament to the Institute. *(The joke finds no response.)* Dr. Wenger, once more I heartily welcome you in all our names.

WENGER. My honoured Director and honoured colleagues! It would be immodest on my part to trespass on your valuable time with a lengthy speech —

EBEN, AND SCHREIM. Hear! Hear!

WENGER. So I will only express my sincerest thanks for the great honour — *(The others show impatience.)*

SCHREIM *(stands up)*. In consideration of the lateness of the hour, I would suggest that our honoured colleague, Dr. Wenger, should postpone his no doubt highly interesting speech of thanks until the next meeting, so that we may proceed at once with the agenda.

THE OTHERS. Agreed! Hear! Hear!
Schreimann presses Wenger's hand and several of the others follow suit.

BERNH. Gentlemen, I have taken the liberty of summoning you to an extraordinary meeting, and must, first of all, apologize for its being at such a late hour, and should like, all the more for that, to express my gratification that the number is complete.

ADLER. Loewenstein is missing.

BERNH. Let us hope he will come still. I see in this a new proof of the great, I might almost say patriotic interest which you all take in our Institute, a proof of our professional solidarity, which prevails, unaffected by occasional differences in single instances, which after all cannot be entirely avoided in any large body, the more so if prominent personages are represented thereon. *(Impatience shown.)* But that we are at one in all fundamental matters has transpired more than once, and we trust will be proved again in the future to the joy of our true supporters and the discomfiture of our enemies. For we have these also. Gentlemen, I think I need not fear the reproach that I am putting your curiosity on the rack. For you all know why I took the liberty of calling you together. All the same, it is my duty to read out the letter which reached me this morning, registered and reply paid.

FILITZ. Let us hear it!

BERNH *(reading).* 'Dear Sir, etc. I have the honour to inform you that the members of the Board of Trustees have passed a unanimous resolution terminating their honorary membership. I bring this resolution to the notice of yourself, as the respected Director, and I should be obliged if you would make the contents thereof known to the other members of the Board of Directors and Board of Tuition.

'Yours etc.
'Councillor Winkler,
'as representing the Committee.'

Ebenwald bends over the letter.

BERNH. Certainly. *(The letter circulates — Bernhardi smiles.)* Gentlemen, I hope you will convince yourselves that I have not suppressed one syllable of this interesting communication. The Committee has resigned and, as a logical sequence, to-day's agenda is as follows: The attitude of the Board of Directors and the Plenary Committee in relation to this fact. Professor Ebenwald wishes to speak.

EBEN. I wish to ask the Director whether he is acquainted with the reason which caused the Trustees to resign, this question being all the more permissible as the Committee in their letter keep silent on this point.

PFLUG *(disgusted)*. Eh!

BERNH. I might put the counter-question whether this cause is unknown to Professor Ebenwald or the other gentlemen. But as we all have plenty of other business outside this room —

CYPRIAN. Quite right.

BERNH. — and the proceedings should not be unnecessarily prolonged, I will answer the question of our sub-director, Professor Ebenwald, with exemplary brevity. The cause lies in the same incident of which you have just been reading in the evening papers with more or less pleasure, in the shape of a so-called interpellation.

SCHREIM. The interpellation does not enter into the question here.

BERNH. Quite true. And, in my opinion, it has no place in Parliament either —

PFLUG. Hear! Hear!

BERNH. As this interpellation refers to an incident, gentlemen, of which witnesses are here present and for which I bear the full responsibility, and has been brought forward as political propaganda for a certain party —

FILITZ. Which party?

PFLUG. The anti-Semitic — clerical Party.

FILITZ. Nonsense!

BERNH. a certain party, of whose aim there can be no doubt, however varied may be our feelings toward it —

PFLUG. Hear! Hear!

BERNH. — misrepresented in party fashion. However, I am not here to justify myself, to whomsoever it may be, but I stand here as Director of this Institute to ask you what is to be our attitude towards the accomplished fact of the resignation of the Committee. Professor Cyprian!

CYPRIAN *(beginning in his monotonous manner)*. A few years ago I was on holiday in Holland, and stood in the Picture Gallery — *(Impatience.)* What is the matter, gentlemen?

SCHREIM. In consideration of the advanced hour, I would earnestly beg Professor Cyprian to spare us his anecdotes and to come to the point as quickly as possible.

CYPRIAN. It would have been no anecdote. In the deepest sense it would have — but as you will, gentlemen. Well, the Committee has resigned. We all know the reason, or let us rather say the pretext. For we all know

that Bernhardi, when refusing the Priest entrance to the sickroom acted entirely in the pursuance of his duty as a physician. In similar circumstances we should all have taken the same course.

FILITZ. Oh!

EBEN. You, at any rate, have never done so.

SCHREIM. As far as we know, it was the first time in Professor Bernhardi's case also.

FILITZ. That's true.

CYPRIAN. If we have never taken such action, gentlemen, the reason is simply that the position in which Professor Bernhardi was recently placed seldom occurs in such an acute form. No one would attempt to deny that innumerable devotional spirits, in face of death, have found peace and consolation in the Holy Sacrament and last unction and that even doubters have found comfort and strength in the ministrations of kindly priests; and in all cases where the dying patient or his relations wish for a priest, no doctor has ever denied him entry.

FILITZ. That would be a fine thing.

CYPRIAN. But the presence of the priest at the death-bed against the wish of the dying or against the well-founded doubts of the person responsible at the end, must be regarded, at the best, as an excessive display of clerical zeal, the prevention of which in certain cases is not only admissible but may even become a duty. And such a case confronts us now. Therefore I repeat with full conviction, we should all have done as Bernhardi did — even you, Professor Ebenwald — and you, Professor Filitz —

FILITZ. No!

CYPRIAN. Or, to put it more correctly, we should have been forced to act so had we followed our true impulses. Only considerations of possible consequences could have induced us to allow the priest to enter. Bernhardi's fault then, if fault it can be called, lay in that he followed the promptings of humanity and of his profession, of which we as doctors must approve: so it seems to me that only one answer is called for by the Committee's letter, that of passing a full and unanimous vote of confidence in our Director, Professor Bernhardi.

PFLUG. Bravo!

Adler nods, somewhat doubtfully.
Wenger looks towards Adler, then round at the others.

BERNH. Professor Ebenwald!

EBEN. Gentlemen, let us not be deceived. Under present conditions the resignation of the Committee is practically the worst thing that can happen to our Institute. I would not hesitate to describe it as a catastrophe. Yes, gentlemen, as a catastrophe. I will not inquire into the question as to whether the members of the Committee were ethically justified in their action. We are not gathered here for the purpose of entering into religious questions, as Professor Cyprian found it necessary to do — to pass criticism on Prince Konstantin, or his Eminence, or Veitsh the Bank Manager, and so on — we simply have to face the fact that the

supporters of our Institute, to whom we are so deeply indebted materially and morally, and on whose continued material and moral support we are dependent *(.Interruptions)* — we are dependent on them, gentlemen — that these supporters have turned their backs on us. And we have to face the further indisputable fact that our honoured Director, Professor Bernhardi, bears the sole responsibility for this misfortune.

BERNH. I admit it —

EBEN. And I consider that it would show, not only the basest ingratitude to the Committee, but would be utterly disloyal to our Institute, if we should at this moment declare ourselves in unanimous agreement with our Director who has, perhaps without evil intent but at any rate with grave indiscretion, brought our Institute to the verge of an abyss. *(Excitement.)* I repeat it, to the verge of an abyss. Therefore, in opposition to Professor Cyprian, I not only oppose the suggested vote of confidence in Professor Bernhardi, but propose, on the contrary, that we give suitable expression of our regret for the occurrence and emphasize that we strongly censure our Director's behaviour towards his Reverence. *(He shouts above the rising tumult.)* I further propose that this Resolution be communicated to the Committee and that they be asked, in consideration thereof, to withdraw their resignation. *(Great excitement.)*

BERNH. Gentlemen. *(Interruptions. He begins again!)* Gentlemen — To avoid all misunderstandings, I wish to remark at once not only that your censure causes me no concern, the more so as it was to be anticipated, but that, on the other hand, I am in the pleasant position of being able to dispense with official marks of confidence. All the same, to save you from taking steps which you might subsequently regret, I will let you into the secret that it is extremely likely that, before very long, we shall have no need for any honorary Committee. We can depend on a State subvention for a considerable amount within a very short time and, what may be of more far-reaching significance, the nationalization of our Institute is receiving consideration in authoritative quarters, as his Excellency again hinted to me yesterday.

EBEN. Small talk at a dance!

CYPRIAN *(stands up).* I must point out that a few days ago his Excellency said to me also —;

FILITZ. All that is beside the point.

SCHREIM. Castles in the air.

EBEN. A subvention now, after all this business.

FILITZ. After this interpellation! *(Noisy interruptions.)*

BERNH *(raising his voice).* You forget, gentlemen, that the question will receive a reply in the House. And there can be no doubt as to the nature of the reply, without questioning the good faith of the Minister of Education, who is doubtless well-informed of the circumstances which led up to this interpellation.

FILITZ. I hope his information was not one-sided.

SCHREIM. The interpellation is not under debate.

FILITZ. Quite true. A motion has been put.

SCHREIM. Put it to the vote.

CYPRIAN *(below his breath to Bernhardi).* Yes, put it to the vote.

BERNH. Gentlemen! Two motions are before the Meeting. One, put forward by Professor Ebenwald that —
Enter Loewenstein.

LOEWEN. Gentlemen, I come from Parliament.
(General excitement.) The interpellation has been answered.

EBEN. Please put the motion to the vote, Professor.

CYPRIAN. I thought we had given up playing at Parliament. Naturally we all want to hear —

SCHREIM *(who has noticed Loewenstein's perturbed face).* I think I am expressing the wishes of all present, if I ask our Chairman to suspend the Meeting for a moment, so that Professor Loewenstein may have the opportunity of giving us a detailed report of the answer to the interpellation.

BERNH. Are we all agreed? Then I will interrupt business for a short time. *(Humorously calling upon Loewenstein to speak.)* Loewenstein has the word.

LOEWEN. There is — An action for sacrilege is to be brought against you. *(Great excitement.)*

PFLUG. Impossible!

CYPRIAN. Loewenstein!

SCHREIM. Oh!

ADLER. Sacrilege!

CYPRIAN. Tell us about it.

EBEN. Perhaps Professor Loewenstein will kindly tell us the details.
Bernhardi stands motionless.

LOEWEN. What is there to tell? There is to be an official inquiry. It's a disgrace! And you've brought it about between you!

FILITZ. No abuse, my dear Loewenstein.

LOEWEN. What can be of further interest to you gentlemen? You will read all the details in tomorrow's morning papers. The crux of the whole speech lay in its climax, and that you know now. It makes no difference that at first his Excellency obviously intended to take another course.

CYPRIAN. What course?

SCHREIM. My dear Loewenstein, do try to speak coherently and —

LOEWEN. Well, gentlemen, I can assure you that, at first it seemed as though the interpellators would suffer an ignominious defeat. The Minister spoke of our Director's great merits and strongly emphasized the point that there can be no question of any malicious intent on his part, that Professor Bernhardi stands aloof from all political strife; that there is no occasion to make public appointments on other grounds than those of worth and merit. And here came interruptions: 'If it were only so', and 'Jews overrunning the Universities', and so on. Then somehow the Minister seemed to veer away from his theme and appeared to become confused and angry. Somehow or other he came to speak of the necessity for religious education, of the combination of a Christian outlook with scientific progress and suddenly he concluded — I am sure to his own surprise — as I have already told you, with the information that he would consult his colleague, the Minister of Justice, as to whether the latter does not feel compelled *(mockingly)* to institute proceedings against Professor Bernhardi for sacrilege. In this manner, he said, or something to that effect, an explanation of the incident referred to by the interpellators could be given in a form equally acceptable not only to all parties in the House, but also to the populace.

PFLUG. Shame!

FILITZ. Oh!

CYPRIAN. And how did the House take it —

LOEWEN. A good deal of approval, no dissent as far as I could hear. Speaker was congratulated.

ADLER. Is it possible that you heard wrong, Lowenstein —

LOEWEN. Oh, you need not believe me unless you like —

CYPRIAN. And, after all, it is no concern of ours.

FILITZ. Indeed!

EBEN. I think we might resume the proceedings.

BERNH *(calmly).* I think I am voicing the wishes of all present by expressing our thanks to Dr. Loewenstein for his report, and I would ask you, gentlemen, to calm yourselves, so that we may continue the Meeting which has been held up for a short time. Gentlemen, as you have rightly pointed out, neither the interpellation nor its answer is under debate. Two motions are before the Meeting.

EBEN. I withdraw mine.
Excitement. Adler whispers explanations to Loewenstein.

EBEN. Or rather, I will change it to another motion, which now seems advisable to me in the interests of our Institute, as a result of the position created by the Minister's reply.

CYPRIAN. The Minister's reply is no concern of ours.

PFLUG. It has nothing whatever to do with us.

EBEN. I move that our respected Director be suspended from the administration of the Institute pending the completion of the inquiry. *(Great excitement.)*

PFLUG. Shame on you, Ebenwald.

CYPRIAN. It is not even certain yet that a charge will be brought.

LOEWEN. Unprecedented!

CYPRIAN. If you withdraw your first motion, then mine still stands — that we wish to express our confidence in our Director, Professor —

PFLUG *(interrupting).* What have the interpellation and the answer to do with us. It is an external matter.

EBEN *(shouting)*. Just consider for a moment. We are in danger of making ourselves ridiculous in the eyes of the world if we go on debating and deciding — while the possibility exists that, at any moment, all our resolutions may be cancelled by a higher authority.

CYPRIAN. Excuse me, Ebenwald, that is nonsense.

ADLER. Who has the power to cancel our resolutions?

LOEWEN. Professor Bernhardi is and remains Director of the Elizabeth Institute. No one has the right to depose him.

FILITZ. In my eyes his reign is over to-day.

CYPRIAN *(to Bernhardt).* Put my motion to the vote.

Commotion.

BERNH. According to rote —

ADLER *(very excited).* Gentlemen, will you permit me to say a few words. If the inquiry foreshadowed by the Minister of Education and Religion leads to legal proceedings, my evidence, among others, cannot be dispensed with, as I was present on that occasion. And not only I, but all of you here, know that the incident in question has not been reported with a strict regard for truth by the interpellators. But just because I have the deepest conviction of Professor Bernhardi's innocence and swear to it —

BERNH. Thank you.

ADLER. Just for this reason I welcome — and we all, without party differences, must welcome —

SCHREIM. There are no party differences!

ADLER. an official inquiry, which will clear up the matter in the full light of publicity. Also, we do not wish to create the impression that we are prematurely taking sides before the completion of the legal inquiry and the final decision, which cannot be other than favourable to Dr. Bernhardi. If, therefore, I vote in favour of the motion of our Vice-President, Professor Ebenwald, for the suspension of our Director — *(Sensation.)*

FILITZ. Bravo!

ADLER. I ask you all, and above all our respected Professor Bernhardi, to see in this a proof of my confidence in him — and of my conviction that he will come scatheless through the inquiry.

CYPRIAN. But, Dr. Adler, this amounts to an admission on your part that such an inquiry is unavoidable.

FILITZ. Who can dispute that?

LOEWEN. After such a denunciation —

FILITZ. Time will show.

PFLUG. All toadying on the Minister's part. He crawls to the Clerical party.

LOEWEN. It is not the first time either.

CYPRIAN *(to Bernhardi)*. Put my motion to the vote.

BERNH. Gentlemen — *(Impatience*

SCHREIM. Is this still supposed to be a Meeting? Saloon without the Billiards.

FILITZ. Professor Ebenwald's is the more far-reaching motion. It should be put to the vote first.

BERNH. Gentlemen, I wish to ask a question of our Vice-President, Professor Ebenwald.

SCHREIM. What is the meaning of this?

FILITZ. To be strictly in order, it is not admissible.

PFLUG. Childish playing at Parliament.

BERNH. Professor Ebenwald may answer my question or not as he pleases.

EBEN. I am at your service.

BERNH. I ask you, Professor Ebenwald, whether it is known to you that I might have averted this interpellation, the Minister's reply to which has caused you to propose my suspension?

LOEWEN. Attention!

SCHREIM. Don't answer!

BERNH. If you are a man, Professor, you will answer.
(Excitement.)

EBEN. Gentlemen, Professor Bernhardi's question does not take me by surprise. As a matter of fact I have been expecting it all through this remarkable meeting. But you will not blame me if, in view of the peculiar tone which the Professor chooses to adopt towards me, I refrain from answering him directly, but give my

explanation to you all as to the meaning of this somewhat insinuating question of Professor Bernhardi's. *(Excitement. Suspense.)* Well, gentlemen, soon after the incident which put our Institute in such a pleasant position, I took the liberty of visiting the Professor and expressing to him my fear that Parliament might take up the matter in a way which might prove detrimental to our Institute. You know we have always had enemies and to-day we have more than some of you suspect. For there are still some among you, gentlemen, who do not know how to read the signs of the times, and to reckon with popular tendencies — and where public Institutions are concerned, these must be taken into account, whether we consider them justified from a philosophic standpoint or not. The fact is that there are many people who do not consider it right that, in an Institute where a Prince and a Bishop are curators, and where, according to statistics, 85 per cent of the patients are Catholics, the house-doctors should, in preponderating numbers, belong to another religion. That sort of thing causes bad blood in certain quarters.

LOEWEN. But 80 per cent of the money which supports us comes from that other religion.

EBEN. That is a side issue. The patients are the chief consideration. Well, as you know, recently there has been a contest for the appointment in the Tugendvetter Section — between Professor Hill of Graz and Dr. Wenger. I may speak of it, in spite of our respected colleague's presence, since he already knows all about it. Hill is, above all, a capable practitioner; our colleague, Wenger, has worked principally in the sphere of theory. He has naturally not had as much scope for practice as Hill — that is still to come. Now just imagine, gentlemen, a good friend comes to see me —

PFLUG. Or perhaps a cousin —

EBEN. Maybe a cousin — and says to me, 'You know remarks will be passed if yet another Jew is elected to the Elizabeth Institute, especially after the painful incident of which all Vienna is talking. And Parliament might attack you.' Well, gentlemen, do you find it so very blameworthy on my part that I should have gone to the Director and said to him, 'Let us rather take Hill, who is after all no unworthy candidate, and so escape all possible unpleasantness.'

WENGER. Hear! Hear! *(Laughter.)*

EBEN. You see, gentlemen! Perhaps it might have been better for me to go to Dr. Wenger and ask him to withdraw. But I hate hole-and-corner methods. So I preferred to go straight away to the Principal. And this is the meaning of Professor Bernhardi's question to me, which was, no doubt, to have touched me to the quick. And it is quite true that we might have been spared the interpellation had Hill stood in Wenger's shoes to-day. Well, I will not say,
'Great it might have been, but it was not to be And now we are in the soup. *Dixi!*

PFLUG. Bravo, Bernhardi!

BERNH. Gentlemen, following on famous precedents, Professor Ebenwald's reply to me has shown more eloquence than pertinence. But each one of you will form his own opinion. I do not defend myself for having refused to enter into the proposed deal —

SCHREIM. Oho!

BERNH. I permit myself to call it a deal with at least as much right as my action towards the Priest is described as sacrilege.

PFLUG. Excellent!

BERNH. All the same I must plead guilty — guilty that I, as Director of the Institute, did not do my utmost to avert an interpellation which seems destined to lower the prestige of our Institute in the eyes of all hypocrites and blockheads. And to accept the consequences voluntarily, as well as to avoid further delay, I herewith resign my position as Head of the Institute. *(Great excitement.)*

CYPRIAN. Are you crazy?

LOEWEN. You mustn't do that.

PFLUG. A vote must be taken.

BERNH. Quite unnecessary! In favour of my suspension we have Professor Ebenwald, Professor Filitz, Doctors Schreimann and Adler —

LOEWEN. That only makes four.

BERNH. I prefer to spare Dr. Wenger a mental conflict. He might perhaps feel constrained to vote for me out of gratitude because I recently gave my decision in his favour. And I would rather not owe to such a motive the now more than doubtful honour of remaining your Director.

SCHREIM. Oho!

FILITZ. This is too much!

CYPRIAN. What *are* you doing?

PFLUG. Adler, this is your fault.

LOEWEN. Put it to the vote!

PFLUG. It would be desertion.

BERNH. Desertion!

CYPRIAN. You *must* await the vote.

BERNH. No. I'll have no vote. I will submit myself to no judgment.

FILITZ. Especially as it has already been expressed.

SCHREIM. Has Professor Bernhardi resigned? Yes or no?

BERNH. Yes.

SCHREIM. Then, according to the Constitution, Professor Ebenwald, as Vice-President, becomes Director of

the Institute and, first and foremost, Chairman of this Meeting.

LOEWEN. Unheard of!

FILITZ. Naturally.

PFLUG. Must we put up with this?

CYPRIAN. Bernhardi! Bernhardi!

EBEN. As Professor Bernhardi, to our regret, has resigned the position of Principal, according to Clause 7 of our Constitution, I take over the Directorship of the Institute and at the same time, the Chair of this Meeting. Gentlemen, I ask you for the same confidence which you always gave so readily to the retiring President, and hope to prove myself worthy of it. I call upon Professor Filitz to speak.

LOEWEN. Infamous!

PFLUG. You are not Principal yet, Professor Ebenwald, not yet! *(Commotion.)*

FILITZ. The first question that now confronts us is — Who is to become Head of Professor Bernhardi's Department?

CYPRIAN. Are you mad?

BERNH. It is true, gentlemen, that I am no longer Principal of the Institute, but I am as much a member as any of you, and Head of my Department.

ADLER. That is understood.

WENGER. Most certainly.

CYPRIAN. It admits of no discussion.

SCHREIM. It would, of course, be liable to lead to complications if the suspended Principal of the Institute —

LOEWEN. He has not been suspended.

CYPRIAN. He resigned of his own accord.

FILITZ. Not quite voluntarily.

PFLUG. He threw it in your faces.

EBEN. Quiet, gentlemen, quiet.

BERNH *(who is now quite beside himself).* Of course no one has the right to turn me out of my Department, but I will take leave of absence until this affair is over.

CYPRIAN. What are you doing?

BERNH. — Taking leave.

EBEN. It is granted.

BERNH. Thank you. And for the duration of my absence I entrust the work of my Department to my assistants, Dr. Kurt Pflugfelder and Dr. Oskar Bernhardi.

EBEN. I can see no objection to that.

BERNH. And now, gentlemen, I start on my furlough, and bid you good day.

LOEWEN. I also.

Cyprian picks up his hat.

BERNH. Why, that's just what would please these gentlemen. I beg you to remain.

PFLUG. Then you must stay.

BERNH. Stay? Here?...

ADLER. Professor, I should be very sorry for you to misinterpret my behaviour. At this moment, before all present, I am glad to express my esteem for you.

BERNH. My best thanks. Who is not for me is against me. Good day, gentlemen!
Exit.

PFLUG *(speaking amid growing disorder, which he often has to shout down).* Gentlemen, are you really letting him go? I beg of you to come to your senses before it is too late. You must not let Bernhardi go. Put all personal questions aside. If you have thought me hasty, I also ask your pardon. Just think — remember for a moment how all this unfortunate business started — and then you must come to your senses. A poor creature is dying in hospital — a young thing who has paid dearly enough for her little bit of youth and joy — sin, if you like — with pain and fear and even life itself. In her last hour Euphoria comes to her. She feels well, is happy again. She thinks herself cured. She dreams that her lover will come to fetch her, to take her away from this house of sickness and pain — out into life and joy. Perhaps it was the most beautiful moment of her life — this last dream. And from this Bernhardi did not wish to waken her to the terrible reality. That is his whole fault. This was his crime. This and nothing else. He begged the Priest to let the poor girl sink to sleep peacefully.

Begged him — you all know it. Even had he been less polite, it would have been pardonable. What extraordinary perversity it must be that can regard the matter in any other light than that of pure humanity. Where is the man whose religious feelings have really been hurt by Bernhardi's action? And should there be even one such man, whose fault is it but that of the people who maliciously perverted and spread the report? Who else is to blame, gentlemen, but those in whose interest it lay that religious feelings should consider themselves to have been hurt, in whose interest it lies that there should be people who offend against religious feelings? And were there no place-seeking, no parliamentary propaganda, no human pettiness — in one word, no politics — would it ever have been possible to work up this case into an agitation? Yes, gentlemen, it has

happened — because there are place-seekers, scoundrels, and fools. But surely, gentlemen, we should not belong to any of these categories. What mirage is it that induces us — you — physicians, men who are used to stand at death-beds, who have insight into real misery, into the core of life, what can induce us — you — to take part in this miserable swindle, to play a lamentable parody of Parliament, with pros and cons, advances and retreats, insincerities and hypocrisies — and to turn away our eyes from the heart of things; for the sake of petty political considerations to leave in the lurch a man who has done nothing but what was natural and proper. For I am far from praising him and calling him a hero, simply because he is a man. And of you, gentlemen, I ask nothing more than that you should also be worthy of this modest title of honour, to regard the decisions and resolutions of this meeting as simply non-existent and to beg Professor Bernhardi to resume the position which can be filled by no better or worthier man than he. Call him back, gentlemen, I adjure you, call him back.

EBEN. May I venture to inquire whether Professor Pflugfelder has reached the end of his rhapsody? It seems so. Well then, gentlemen, we can go on with the agenda.

PFLUG. Good day, gentlemen.

CYPRIAN. Good-bye.

LOEWEN. You are no longer a quorum.

SCHREIM. We shall not desert the Institute.

FILITZ. We shall take the responsibility of passing our resolutions without your help.

PFLUG *(opening the door).* Ah, just in the nick of time. Dr. Hochroitzpointner, please walk in.

LOEWEN. Hail to the new Vice-President!

PFLUG. Now the company is complete. My best wishes.
Exit Cyprian, Pflugfelder, Loewenstein.

EBEN. Do you want anything, Dr. Hoch —

HOCH. Oh! *(Stands at the door hesitating.)*

EBEN. Very well, then. Shut the door. *(This is done.)* Gentlemen, we will now resume the Meeting.

CURTAIN

ACT IV



Drawing room in Bernhardi's house. Doors at back, door right. Enter Pflugfelder and, immediately after him, Loewenstein.

LOEWEN *(speaking behind the scenes)*. Professor Pflugfelder. *(Enters.)*

PFLUG. Ah, Loewenstein. Why, you are quite out of breath.

LOEWEN. I have been running after you right up the street. *(Questioningly.)* Well, what?...

PFLUG. Weren't you at court?

LOEWEN. I was called away when the length of the term was being discussed. How long —?

PFLUG. Two months.

LOEWEN. Two months in spite of the Priest's evidence? Is it possible?

PFLUG. That evidence! Only the Priest himself benefited by it. It did Bernhardi no good.

LOEWEN. But that — How so? The Priest —

PFLUG. Why, didn't you hear the Public Prosecutor's speech?

LOEWEN. Only the beginning of it. Four times was I called away during these proceedings. Other times one can wait for days till it enters a patient's head —

PFLUG. Well, well, you have nothing to complain about on that score.

LOEWEN. What about the Public Prosecutor?

PFLUG. The Priest's evidence that he felt no violence, but only a light touch on the shoulder, gave the Public Prosecutor a welcome opportunity to picture his Reverence as a pattern of Christian forbearance and charity and, at the same time, to sing a pæan of praise to the whole priesthood — who could get on quite well without it.

LOEWEN. Then Bernhardi's conviction rests entirely on the evidence of this hysterical sister Ludmilla and that fine fellow Hochroitzpointner. For all the other witnesses cleared him completely. I must really apologize to Adler. He behaved splendidly. And Cyprian, too! Not to speak of your son.

Enter Cyprian.

PFLUG. Where is Bernhardi?

LOEWEN. Have they kept him there right away?

CYPRIAN. I expect he will come with Dr. Goldenthal.

PFLUG. Oh! Is he bringing *him* along?

CYPRIAN *(annoyed).* We can hardly do without the Counsel for the defence in our consultation to-day.

PFLUG. We ought to have done without him from the beginning.

LOEWEN. That's very true.

CYPRIAN. What have you got against him? He spoke excellently. Not very pungent perhaps....

PFLUG. Certainly no one could accuse him of that.

LOEWEN. Goldenthal behaved like a turncoat, which was only to be expected of him!

CYPRIAN. How so to be expected?

LOEWEN. A convert! His wife wears a cross that size. His son is being educated at Kalksburg, the Jesuit college. Those are the right sort of people.

CYPRIAN. You really get on one's nerves with your fixed idea.

LOEWEN. I am no ostrich to hide my head in the sand. Dr. Goldenthal is one of those who are always afraid some one might imagine they are — With a different lawyer, the matter might have ended otherwise.

CYPRIAN. I very much doubt it. With a different defendant, perhaps.

PFLUG. Eh!

CYPRIAN. Well, my friends, it is no use reproaching Bernhardi after the event — certainly not to-day. But even his most glowing admirers can hardly say that he behaved very wisely.

LOEWEN. How so? I was lost in admiration of him. That he could keep calm, even in the face of that rascal, Hochroitzpointner's evidence —

CYPRIAN. Calm, do you call it? It was mere obstinacy.

LOEWEN. Obstinacy? How do you make that out?

PFLUG *(to Cyprian).* I expect he was not present when Bernhardi demanded that Ebenwald should be subpoenad.

LOEWEN. Ah!

CYPRIAN. Didn't you know that? He wanted Flint, the Cabinet Minister, called as well.

LOEWEN. Magnificent!

CYPRIAN. It was anything but magnificent. What have Ebenwald and Flint to do with the case?

LOEWEN. Well, really now —

CYPRIAN. Absolutely nothing. It really looked like sensationalism.

PFLUG. But —

CYPRIAN. If you wanted to trace the matter to its roots, there would be no end to the people who might have been called to Court to-day. It would have been an illustrious assembly, I can tell you.

LOEWEN. Pity! Pity!
Enter Kurt.

PFLUG. Kurt! *(Runs to him and embraces him.)*

LOEWEN *(to Cyprian)*. Why this touching family scene?

CYPRIAN. Haven't you heard? Kurt called Hochroitzpointner a liar in the open court.

LOEWEN. Did he?

CYPRIAN. Yes, and he was fined 200 Kronen for contempt of Court.

LOEWEN. My dear Dr. Pflugfelder, may I give you a kiss, too?

KURT. Many thanks, Professor. I will take it as done.

LOEWEN. Then at least let me pay a share of the 200

Kronen.

PFLUG. *We'll* see to that. But listen to me, Kurt. Don't you let it enter your head to fight that fellow —

KURT. Let him only challenge me. I would refer it to a duelling-committee. And then we shall see —

LOEWEN. He'll take good care to keep quiet.

KURT. I am afraid so too. But all the same, the Hochroitzpointner affair is not ended, even if the Bernhardi affair is.

CYPRIAN. Which we hope is not the case.

LOEWEN. What do you intend to do, Dr. Kurt?

Enter Dr. Goldenthal. Stout gentleman. Curly hair sprinkled with grey. Black side-whiskers. Stately. Somewhat unctuous and nasal.

GOLDEN. Good evening, gentlemen.

CYPRIAN. Where is Bernhardi?

GOLDEN. I advised the Professor to leave the Court by a side door.

LOEWEN. To escape the ovations prepared for him?

GOLDEN. Patience, gentlemen! That may still come.

CYPRIAN. Well, I must say —

GOLDEN. For, even if we have won no victory this time —

LOEWEN. That's certain, anyway.

GOLDEN. It was, at least, an honourable defeat.

PFLUG. At any rate in the eyes of those who are not going to prison.

GOLDEN *(laughing)*. Do you mean the defending Counsel by that, Professor? That is one of the few unjust laws against which I have not yet felt impelled to agitate. *(Changes his tone.)* But now, gentlemen, let us speak seriously. Perhaps it is just as well that the Professor is not here yet, for I urgently wish to ask you to support me to the utmost in the coming consultation.

CYPRIAN. In what way?

GOLDEN. Our respected Professor Bernhardi is — how shall I say it? somewhat obstinate. Unfortunately it was apparent to-day in the course of the proceedings. This idea of calling the Cabinet Minister — and then his defiant silence — it made no good impression. We won't speak about it any more. But it seems that now Professor Bernhardi means to continue to play the injured party and intends to dispense in advance with all legal steps against the verdict — and that —

CYPRIAN. I expected something of the sort.

LOEWEN. And your idea, I presume, is to appeal.

GOLDEN. Naturally.

LOEWEN. Anyway, it would be hopeless.

PFLUG. I know what we ought to do now. We must appeal to the public.

GOLDEN. Excuse me, Professor. The hearing was not behind closed doors.

PFLUG. We must appeal to the populace. That's what I mean. We've been foolish to keep silent so long. Look at our opponents. The Clerical papers have made all the commotion they could. It was entirely their doing that the charge against Bernhardi was not a civil but a criminal one and that he could be brought before a jury right away. They did not wait for the affair to be concluded before writing about it, as our Liberal papers seem to have thought necessary.

LOEWEN. They are more high-minded.

PFLUG. Yes, and it might sometimes be called by another name. But things have fallen out as they so often do in this world. What the unscrupulousness and hatred of our enemies could not quite accomplish, has been brought about by the laxity and cowardice of our so-called friends.

CYPRIAN. You want to speak to the people? To our populace? I should think to-day's jury might have given you a sample of what to expect.

PFLUG. Perhaps the right words were not found to touch them.

GOLDEN. Oh!

PFLUG. You may think me a fool if you like, but I believe in an elementary sense of Justice among heads untouched by legal quibbles — in the sound and healthy instinct of the people.

LOEWEN. Pflugfelder is right. We must hold meetings to give the people the true facts of the Bernhardi case.

CYPRIAN. It is quite probable that such meetings might be prohibited.

PFLUG. There are other opportunities. The Municipal Elections are near at hand.

CYPRIAN. Are you standing, perhaps?

PFLUG. No, but I shall *speak.* And I shall not fail to put the Bernhardi case —

CYPRIAN. What will you say? You will be reduced to saying the obvious —

PFLUG. And what if I am? If our opponents have the impudence to deny the obvious, we have no alternative but to shout it to the world again and again. The fear that some snobs might call us windbags must not frighten us into leaving the field clear for paradoxes and lies.

LOEWEN. And it is a question for consideration whether Bernhardi should not serve his two months anyway in the interest of the campaign. *(Laughter.)*

PFLUG. Certainly! The infamy practised against him would then become more conspicuous.
Enter Bernhardi and Oskar.

BERNH *(who has just heard the others laughing, very cheerily).* There seem to be high doings here. Let me join in. I must apologize for keeping you waiting.
Handshakes all round.

CYPRIAN. So you were able to escape the ovations.

BERNH. Not quite. To be on the safe side a few — gentlemen — were waiting at the side door also. They gave me a suitable reception.

LOEWEN. Did they unharness your horses?

BERNH. 'Down with the Jews', they cried. 'Down with the Freemasons'.

LOEWEN. You see!

BERNH. I hope to have the pleasure of your Company for supper, gentlemen. You might see, Oskar, whether things are in order. The fact is my housekeeper has given me notice. Her Father Confessor explained to her that she could not possibly remain in such a house without endangering her soul! So it will be rather a frugal repast as befits the table of a convicted prisoner. Why Oskar, I believe there are tears in your eyes. *(Aside.)* Don't be sentimental.

OSKAR. I am only raging.

Exit and returns in a few moments.
Enter Adler.

BERNH. Ah, welcome, Dr. Adler. A repentant sinner is more pleasing to me than ten righteous men.

ADLER *(lightly)*. I was never a sinner, Professor. I repeat once more that these proceedings seemed unavoidable to me from the first. Of course I could not foresee that Hochroitzpointner would receive more credence at Court than Professor Cyprian or I.

CYPRIAN. We have nothing to complain of. The Priest fared no better.

GOLDEN. Yes, gentlemen, the Priest! That was a remarkable, one might almost say in a certain sense, a historic moment, when the Priest gave his evidence and — certainly only in answer to my question — expressed his conviction that Professor Bernhardi intended no hostile demonstration against the Catholic Church. One can measure the strength of certain tendencies among our populace to-day by the fact that even the Priest's evidence could do us no good.

BERNH. Had his Reverence had any fear of that, his evidence would no doubt have been different.

GOLDEN. Oh, Professor, how can you imagine that a servant of the Church would speak a deliberate untruth.

PFLUG. Such things have happened.

ADLER. I think, Professor, you are doing the Priest an injustice. His words and his whole manner seemed to express a measure of sympathy towards you. He is not quite an ordinary man. I had that impression even that time in the sickroom.

BERNH. Sympathy! I can only believe in that when its expression involves some personal risk.

GOLDEN. I doubt whether his Reverence will find his evidence to-day of much service to his future career. Anyway we will hope that he will be in a position to bear witness again — And then, Professor, if Justice is meted out to you, you yourself will also be more just.

BERNH. I have already told you, sir, that I decline to enter into any more litigation. To-day's case was a farce! I will not subject myself to these people, or their like, again. Besides, you know as well as I that it would be useless.

GOLDEN. It is impossible to say how a higher Court will —

PFLUG. The higher the worse.

GOLDEN. Gentlemen, I expect it has not escaped your notice that certain changes in the political situation have been brewing during the last few months.

LOEWEN. I see no signs of it. Matters are getting worse; and worse.

GOLDEN. Pardon me. I can feel a freer air being wafted through our land — and next time our case comes up, it may be tried under less clouded skies.

BERNH. And what is the utmost I could hope for? A favourable verdict. That would not satisfy me now. Even if I obtained Justice now, I should not be finished by a very long way with Messrs. Flint, Ebenwald and their tribe.

GOLDEN. My dear Professor, I have already told you that there is no legal redress for your complaints against these gentlemen.

BERNH. I shall be believed — even without legal proof.

GOLDEN. But these gentlemen can be charged with no offence at all, in a judicial sense.

BERNH. That is just why I wish to dispense with any further judicial handling of the case.

GOLDEN. It is my duty, Professor, to warn you against being over-hasty. I do so now, before witnesses. I can understand that the injustice you have suffered makes your blood boil. But the path which you seem inclined to take is beset with more lawsuits —

CYPRIAN. And new verdicts, no doubt.

BERNH. The truth will stand out clear, just as it does to-day.

PFLUG. Whatever you have in view, you may reckon on me.

LOEWEN. And on me. And I maintain that we must strike at the root of the whole system.

PFLUG. Flint must be sent to the devil.

GOLDEN. Gentlemen!

LOEWEN. Yes, this Flint, on whom you built such hopes and who has now become merely the catspaw of the Clericals. This so-called man of science under whom the parsons have become more impudent than ever. If this continues all our schools will be delivered up to the black brood by the Minister for Religion and Hypocrisy.

GOLDEN. Pardon me, it is a well-known fact that journalists of undoubtedly Liberal tendencies have the entrée to the Ministry of Education. And as regards the measures of the new Minister, to which you are obviously alluding, I must say, at the risk of earning your displeasure, that to me they do not appear to be worthless.

PFLUG. What? Are you in favour of the compulsory confession of schoolchildren? Do you approve of the foundation of a Catholic University?

GOLDEN. I don't say that I would send my sons there to study.

LOEWEN. Why not, Doctor? It will be possible to get there by through train from Kalksburg.

GOLDEN. Kalksburg, gentlemen, is one of the most excellent Colleges of which our country can boast. And I will take this opportunity to admit with pleasure that there may be among the much abused Clericals men of outstanding intellect and even, as we have seen to-day, men of courage and nobility. And my principle has always been, even in the heat of battle, respect for my opponent's convictions.

LOEWEN. The convictions of Minister Flint!

GOLDEN. He is the protector of all convictions. And that is his duty in the office to which Providence has called him. Believe me, gentlemen, there are matters which are best left alone — which should not be touched upon.

PFLUG. And why, if I may ask? All progress in the world is due to the fact that someone has had the courage to touch on matters of which the people, in whose interests it lay, cried 'hands off' for centuries.

GOLDEN. Your witty observation can hardly be applied in such a general sense, and anyway it can have no bearing on our affair as it no doubt lay far from our friend Bernhardi's intentions to further the world's progress.

LOEWEN. Time may show that he has done so, nevertheless.

BERNH. Oh, oh, you are letting your ideas run away with you.

PFLUG. As things stand at present your case can only be regarded from a general point of view. Your opponents have already made the start. The State Prosecutor also did not hesitate. You must have noticed it, Doctor.

GOLDEN. I could not follow the Public Prosecutor in this sphere. Politics are not my business. My duty is to conduct the defence.

PFLUG. It is a pity you did not fulfil that duty.

BERNH. Pflugfelder, I will not allow —

GOLDEN. Oh, let him talk, Professor; the matter begins to interest me. You consider that I did not fulfil my duty in defending my client?

PFLUG. For what my opinion is worth — no. For, on listening to you, Dr. Goldenthal, one must have obtained the impression that Bernhardi's behaviour towards the Priest caused the deepest offence to the religious feelings of the whole Catholic world, from his Holiness the Pope down to the pietist in the most remote village. And, instead of declaring quite simply that every doctor was bound to act as Bernhardi did and that none but a fool or a knave could dispute this, you found it necessary to depict what was his simple

duty as a physician as an act of thoughtlessness needing an apology. You treated the malicious idiots on the jury, who had made up their minds from the first moment to find Bernhardi guilty, as the choicest brains of the Nation — and the judges who had, so to say, brought the term of imprisonment for Bernhardi with them in their dispatch cases, you treated as patterns of penetration and Justice. Even that ragamuffin Hochroitzpointner and Sister Ludmilla you handled with kid gloves and went so far as to credit these false witnesses with good faith. And you, you, Dr. Goldenthal, acted as though you yourself, in your innermost soul, believed in the indispensability and power of that sacrament, against which Bernhardi is supposed to have offended, and hinted that our friend Bernhardi is really very much in the wrong in not sharing these beliefs. You always gave first a polite nod to your client and then a deep obeisance towards the quarter where his enemies stood, towards stupidity, calumny and hypocrisy. If Bernhardi is satisfied with this, that is his concern, but I am afraid that I, Dr. Goldenthal, have not the right understanding for this kind of defence.

GOLDEN. And I can only say, Professor, that it is a great blessing your undoubted gifts have been applied to Medicine and not to Law, for, with your temperament and your conception of the dignity of a Court of Law, you would have managed to get the most innocent man into prison.

LOEWEN. You seem to have success in that direction also, Dr. Goldenthal, in spite of your fortunate lack of temperament.

BERNH. Now really, that is enough. I must ask you —
The door into the dining-room is opened.

GOLDEN *(waving off the invitation)*. My dear Professor, happy the man who has such friends. I, for my part, will gladly bear the reproach that I am not one of those advocates who subject their clients to the anger of the judge merely for the sake of a rhetorical effect. But, of course, Professor, I would not think of forcing my advice on you any further and leave it to you —

CYPRIAN *(to Pflugfelder).* There you are!

BERNH. Oh, no, no, Dr. Goldenthal.

PFLUG. If anyone is to take his departure, it is, of course, I. I must ask your pardon, my dear Bernhardi, for letting myself be carried away, although I cannot withdraw anything I have said. Not another word, Bernhardi. I am in the way here. *(Exit)*

Enter Servant. Whispers to Bernhardi.

Bernhardi very much taken aback. Hesitates. Turns to Cyprian and away again without speaking.
All except Bernhardi have walked into the dining-room.

BERNH *(to Servant).* Ask him in.
Exit Servant.
Bernhardi draws curtain over dining-room door.
Enter Priest.

BERNH *(receiving him at the door).* Come in.

PRIEST. Good evening, Professor.

BERNH. A visit of condolence, your Reverence?

PRIEST. Not quite that. But I had an irresistible desire to speak to you to-day, still.

BERNH. I am at your service, your Reverence.
He offers the Priest a chair. Both sit dozen.

PRIEST. In spite of the unfavourable result of the hearing, Professor, I am sure you realize that the verdict against you can in no sense be said to lie at my door.

BERNH. Were I to attempt to give you thanks, your Reverence, for having spoken the truth under oath, I must needs fear to give offence. So —

PRIEST *(already somewhat put out).* I did not come here to receive your thanks, Professor, although I went beyond my mere duty as a witness. For if you will cast your mind back, you will remember that, in answer to a question from your advocate, I expressed my conviction without hesitation that your attitude towards me at the sickroom door was in no way actuated by feelings of hostility towards the Catholic Church.

BERNH. Certainly in this your Reverence exceeded the scope of your duty, but perhaps the effect which your announcement produced is sufficient reward to you for this.

PRIEST. Whether this effect will be universally favourable to me, Professor, outside the four walls of the Law Court, is an open question, which we will not discuss. But you may readily imagine that I did not come here to recapitulate in private what I have already said in public. What induced me to call on you to-day still, at so late an hour, is the fact that I have a further admission to make.

BERNH. A further admission?

PRIEST. Yes. In Court I expressed my conviction that you had no animosity towards me — or towards that which I represent. But now I feel myself compelled to admit that in this particular case — only in this case, mind you — you acted absolutely correctly in your capacity as a doctor — that within the sphere of your duties, just as I in mine, you could not have acted differently.

BERNH. Do I understand you aright? You admit that I did absolutely the right thing — that I could not have done otherwise?

PRIEST. That, *as a doctor,* you could not have done otherwise.

BERNH *(after a pause).* If such is your opinion, your Reverence, I must say that the best, indeed the only, suitable opportunity for this admission was afforded a few hours ago.

PRIEST. I need hardly tell you that it was not lack of courage which sealed my lips. Otherwise should I be here now?

BERNH. Then — what —?

PRIEST. I will tell you, Professor. What silenced me in Court was the sudden insight that came to me like a Divine revelation that one word *more* might do incalculable harm to a Holy Cause, to that cause which to me is the most sacred in the world.

BERNH. I can hardly imagine, your Reverence, that to a man of your courage there could be a holier cause than Truth.

PRIEST. What? Nothing holier than the insignificant truth, which I might have upheld to the end, in this one small instance? Why, not even you could maintain that had I publicly admitted not only your good intentions — in which I already went further than the majority of my well-wishers will ever forgive me — but had also conceded your *right* to turn me away from the bed of a dying woman, a Christian, a sinner, then the enemies of our Holy Church would have seized on my words and used them to an extent for which I did not dare to be responsible. For our enemies are not all honourable men, Professor, as you are no doubt aware. And the unimportant truth to which I should have given utterance, would have become in a higher sense a lie. And what would have been the outcome of it? I should have stood before my superiors, to whom I owe duty and obedience — and even before my God — not only as a man of ill-considered lenience — but as a renegade and a traitor. That is why I held my peace.

BERNH. In that case, why speak now?

PRIEST. Because, in the moment when that revelation came to me, I swore a silent oath to make personally to you, the only man who really has a right to hear it, the confession which in public would only have been misunderstood and distorted.

BERNH. Many thanks, your Reverence. And let us hope you will never be in a position to bear public witness where larger issues are at stake than — my insignificant fate. For it might easily happen that, even at such a time, you might regard as Divine Revelation what appears to me to be merely personal caution upon your part, and that then an even higher truth than the one which you represent and guard, might be endangered.

PRIEST. I can admit of no higher truth, Professor, than my Church. And the most sacred commands of my Church are loyalty and submission. And if I were to be cast out of the Community, which sheds such limitless blessings upon the world, it would go other with me, Professor, than with a man who follows an independent calling, as you do for instance — I should lose all opportunity for activity and the whole purpose of my existence would be lost.

BERNH. I believe, your Reverence, there have been priests whose purpose in life only sprang into being when they tore themselves loose from their Communities and proclaimed to the world that which they held to be the truth, fearing neither danger nor inconvenience.

PRIEST. Were I one of these, Professor —

BERNH. Well?

PRIEST. — then no doubt God would have permitted me to say at Court to-day what you alone are allowed to hear now, within these four walls.

BERNH. So, it was God who sealed your lips! And now God sends you to me to confess in private what you were forbidden to speak in public! I must say He makes things very convenient for you, your God!

PRIEST *(rising).* You will excuse me, I trust, Professor. I have nothing to add to my admission, which you curiously enough seem to regard as the confession of a wrong done to you. My vow certainly did not include a conversation with you upon matters on which we can have no common ground.

BERNH. So, you shut the door in my face, your Reverence? However, I cannot accept this as a proof that you are within and I without the gates. All that remains to me now is to express my regret that your Reverence should have had the trouble of this visit in vain.

PRIEST *(not without irony).* In vain?

BERNH. Yes — since I am unable to absolve you as completely as you might expect after so unusual a step.

PRIEST. Absolution? I do not seek it. Perhaps all I wanted was reassurance. And that has been given to me in greater measure than I dared to hope. For now, Professor, I begin to see the whole matter in a new light. It has become clear to me that the whole motive of my visit, of my inspiration, was based on an error.

BERNH. Oh!

PRIEST. I had no confession to make to you as I wrongly thought, but only to rid myself of a doubt. Of a doubt, Professor, of which I myself was hardly conscious when I entered this room. But now it is dispelled and light has entered my soul. I very much regret, Professor, that I must take back what I admitted to you a few minutes ago —

BERNH. How can you take it back now? I have accepted it.

PRIEST. It holds good no longer. For now I know, Professor, that you were not in the right when you sent me away from that death-bed.

BERNH. Ah!

PRIEST. Not you! Others, in a like case, might have been justified. But you are not such a one. I know it now. At best it is self-deception on your part to think that it was your duty as a physician, or human compassion, that compelled you to refuse me admission to the sickroom. This compassion — this sense of duty — were only pretexts, perhaps not quite consciously, but all the same only pretexts.

BERNH. Pretexts? Have you forgotten already, your Reverence, what you admitted to me only a moment ago, that a responsibility rests on me as on you?

PRIEST. That I still concede. What I dispute now, is that you were actuated by this sense of responsibility in refusing me admission to the death-chamber. The real motive of your attitude towards me was not your sense of responsibility, not the noble impulse of the moment as you imagine and as I myself came near to believing. It lay much deeper — in the very roots of your being. Yes, Professor, the real motive was — how shall I put it — an antipathy towards me — an unconquerable antipathy, I might even say animosity —?

BERNH. Animosity —?

PRIEST. — Against all that this garment represents for you and others of your kind. Oh, you have given me sufficient proofs during this conversation that that is how matters stand. And now I know also that, at that time, just as to-day, your whole attitude, every word you spoke, expressed this deep and insurmountable animosity, which a man of your type finds unconquerable against any of my calling.

BERNH. Animosity! You repeat again and again. What if it were so? What I have suffered in the course of the last few weeks, this whole agitation against me, which you yourself find false and unworthy — is not this sufficient justification for what you call animosity — even though it comes after the event, assuming that a spark of it was in me before? And I will not deny that, though by birth I have a strong, even a combative sense of Justice, I have nevertheless during the last few weeks, felt the beginnings of such animosity rising up in me — not for you so much as for the — company that has gathered round you. But one thing I can swear to — at the moment when I denied your Reverence entry to the sickroom — there was no breath of such animosity in me. I stood before your Reverence a physician, as pure in heart as ever any member of your calling performing a Church rite at the altar. No less pure in heart than you, who came to bring my patient the last religious consolations. You knew this when you entered my room a moment ago. You confessed it to me. You should not suddenly cast out this conviction because you feel, as I also feel, and have perhaps never felt more strongly than in this hour, that something stands between us — a something which will not be denied, even under more pleasant conditions.

PRIEST. And you never felt it more strongly than in *this* hour?

BERNH. Yes, in this hour, when I stand facing perhaps one of the most enlightened of your calling. And now it seems to me, your Reverence, that animosity is too poor and small a word for that which parts us, and will probably part us for all time. It appears to me as something far deeper — and more hopeless.

PRIEST. You may be right there, Professor. Hopeless. Just in this instance, between you and me, it manifests itself. For I have often had opportunity for similar conversations, frequently treading on delicate ground, with men of your circles — scholars, enlightened men *(slightly mocking)*, but never did the possibility of an understanding seem so remote as now. However, perhaps just on the evening of this day, I should not have allowed myself to be led into such a discussion.

BERNH. I trust, your Reverence, your opinion of me is not so low as to suggest that the bad humour I have acquired from to-day's proceedings, is responsible for my outlook on the world.

PRIEST. No, indeed, Professor. When so deep, so unfathomable a chasm opens up between two such men as you and I, who have no personal animosity towards one another, the trouble must certainly have deeper roots. And in my opinion it lies in the fact that while some understanding *might* be reached between belief and doubt — none is possible 'twixt humility and — you must excuse the word in view of some of your utterances — arrogance!

BERNH. Arrogance —? And you, your Reverence, who can find no milder word for what you suspect in the depths of my soul, do you really think yourself free from animosity — towards men of my type?

PRIEST *(inclined to be hasty, then mastering himself, with hardly perceptible smile.)* I know myself to be

free. My religion, Professor, bids me love even those who hate me.

BERNH *(impressively).* And mine, your Reverence, or what is planted in my breast in place of religion, bids me bring comprehension even where I am misunderstood.

PRIEST. I don't doubt your good intentions. But comprehension has its limits, Professor. Where material thoughts are paramount, there exists, as you will, no doubt, often have experienced yourself, error and self-deception. What never deceives, what cannot deceive a man of my type is *(hesitatingly)* is — I had better choose a word at once, Professor, against which even you cannot cavil — the spirit within.

BERNH. Let us call it that, your Reverence. I also endeavour to put my trust in this spirit within, although in my soul it may flow from different sources than in yours. What else remains to us — when all is said? And if it comes harder to a man of my type, than to one of yours, then the God who created you with so humble a mind and me with so much — arrogance — this incomprehensible God will have had His reasons for this also.

The Priest gives him a long look — then, with a sudden decision, holds out his hand to him.

BERNH *(hesitating, smiling a little).* Across — the chasm — your Reverence?

PRIEST. Let us refrain from looking down for a moment.
Bernhardi gives him his hand.

PRIEST. Good-bye, Professor.

Exit.
Bernhardi alone, seems undecided for a moment. His brow wrinkles in meditation, then becomes clear again; he makes a gesture as though shaking something off, then draws back curtain and opens door. The others are seen sitting at table, some already standing and smoking.

CYPRIAN. At last!

ADLER. We are already at the cigars.

CYPRIAN *(coming through door towards Bernhardi).* What was it? A patient — so late?

BERNH. Your question is hard to answer.

OSKAR *(also coming out of dining-room).* Here are a few telegrams for you, father.

BERNH *(opens one).* Ah, that's good.

CYPRIAN. May I ask what it is?

BERNH. A former patient who assures me of his sympathy. A poor devil who was lying ill a few weeks at the Elizabeth Institute.

GOLDEN. May I see? Florian Ebeseder.

LOEWEN. Ebeseder? Florian? That seems to be a Christian.

PFLUG *(touching his shoulder).* Such things happen!

BERNH *(opens another telegram).* Good God! *(To Cyprian.)* Look at that!

ADLER. Read it out, read it out!

CYPRIAN *(reads),* 'We assure the courageous champion of freedom and enlightenment of our heartiest sympathy and respect, and assure him that we shall always stand by him in his fight against the obscurantists — Dr. Reiss, Walter Koenig—'

BERNH. Never heard these names before.

GOLDEN. This is a most welcome demonstration. It is to be presumed that it will not be an isolated one.

BERNH. And can nothing be done against it?

GOLDEN. What? Against it —?

OSKAR. Father, won't you sit down and have some supper now?
Servant enters with card.

BERNH. What is it now?

OSKAR *(reads).* The chairman of the Brigittenau Freethinkers.

BERNH. The Freethinkers from Brigittenau — lam not at home. Please tell the gentlemen that I am not in.

GOLDEN. But why?

BERNH. I am already in gaol. I am executed.
(Goes into dining-room. The others follow, with the exception of Goldenthal and Lowenstein.)

GOLDEN *(to the servant, whom he catches at the door).* Tell the gentlemen that the Professor is very tired now, but he will — When is the Professor's consulting hour?

SERVANT. From two o'clock onwards.

GOLDEN. Well then, it will give the Professor pleasure to receive the gentlemen to-morrow at a quarter to two.
Exit Servant.

LOEWEN. It will give him pleasure? Are you sure of that?

GOLDEN. Leave it to me to guard my client's interests.
Loewenstein shrugs his shoulders and goes into the dining-room.
Enter Servant with card.

GOLDEN *(turns to him).* What's this? Let me see. Oh!

SERVANT. The gentleman will not be put off.

GOLDEN. Ask him in.

Exit Servant.
Goldenthal clears his throat. Prepares himself.
Enter Kulka.

KULKA. Oh, Dr. Goldenthal, if I am not mistaken?

GOLDEN. That is my name. We know each other, Dr. Kulka.... You must make do with me for to-day. The Professor is somewhat fatigued as you may imagine.

KULKA. Fatigued?... H'm!... Then I had better — I could not face my Chief —

GOLDEN. But you hear —

KULKA. Certainly I hear. I also understand. But what's the use of that? If I can't see the Professor *I* shall only get the blame for it.

GOLDEN. Perhaps I can be of service to you?

KULKA *(hesitating).* If you would be so kind — May I ask whether it is true that Professor Bernhardi does not intend to appeal?

GOLDEN. As a matter of form we have reserved time for consideration.

Kulka takes out his notebook.

GOLDEN *(influenced by the notebook, talks as though making a speech).* For, though it does not enter our minds to cast the slightest doubt on the legal knowledge and wisdom of our Austrian judges, or to mistrust the sound sense of our fellow-citizens on the jury, still we cannot shake off the suspicion that the prejudiced attitude of a certain section of our press, which we will not designate more nearly, prepared the way for a miscarriage of Justice and —

Enter Bernhardt.

KULKA. Ah, Professor —

BERNH. What is all this?

GOLDEN. I took the liberty, Professor, as you did not wish to be disturbed — and I think I expressed your —

BERNH. With whom have I the pleasure?

KULKA. Kulka of the *Topical News.* My Chief who has the pleasure of your personal acquaintance, asks to be remembered to you and —

GOLDEN. Reports have been spread, which it would be best to contradict at once.

KULKA. It is said, Professor, that you decline to take further legal steps —

GOLDEN. I have already explained to Dr. Kulka that we have reserved time for consideration.

BERNH. That's true.

Enter singly from the next room, *Lowenstein, Cyprian*, *Adler, Kurt*, *Oskar.*

KULKA. I am very grateful to you for this explanation. And now, Professor, I have to convey to you a special request from my Chief. During to-day's proceedings you suggested that the Minister of Education should be called. It would appear from this that there are aspects of the case which did not come to light during the hearing, or which were perhaps purposely suppressed. My Chief would be honoured, Professor, to offer you the hospitality of the columns of our paper —

BERNH *(with a gesture of refusal).* Thank you. Thank you —

KULKA. You are, no doubt, aware, Professor, that although our paper placed the fullest trust and confidence in his Excellency at the beginning of his official career, we have lately been forced to put up an energetic opposition to surprising anti-progressive, not to say reactionary measures of the Minister of Education, although, as has always been our policy, we have preserved the moderation which seems to be essential for fruitful work — even in the political arena. And so, in our fight for progress and freedom, we would naturally welcome in our ranks a man whose passion, curbed by discernment, assures us of an ally who —

BERNH. Excuse me, I am no ally.

KULKA. But we are your allies, Professor.

BERNH. No doubt you imagine so at the moment. My matter is a purely personal one.

LOEWEN. But —

KULKA. Many a personal matter holds the seed of a political event. Yours —

BERNH. That is an accident by which I refuse to be governed. I belong to no party and wish to be adopted by none —

KULKA. You will hardly be able to escape it, Professor —

BERNH. Then I will do nothing towards it. Whoever becomes my partisan, does so at his own risk. *(Speaking lightly with his characteristic ironical smile.)* Just as I was accused to-day of having offended against the Catholic religion, next I might be suspected of being an enemy of another religion, perhaps one nearer to you —

KULKA. I am a freethinker, Professor. We all are — at any rate inwardly. Our standpoint, the standpoint of my paper, as is well known, is that of absolute freedom of thought. What does Frederick say?
'Let every man work out his own salvation.'

BERNH. Then please apply this principle to me also. Give my best thanks to your Chief for his kind invitation, but it would be a direct misuse of his confidence, if I were to avail myself of his offer. I should be sailing under false colours.

KULKA. Is that really your last word, Professor?

BERNH. My last word seldom differs from my first.

KULKA. My Chief will be extremely sorry... I am quite at a loss — but should you still decide to give public expression to your grievance against his Excellency, Professor, may I ask that no other publication —

BERNH. You may rely on it that, whatever steps I take, I shall never shelter under the wing of any newspaper. My best regards to your Chief.

KULKA. Thank you, Professor. Good day, gentlemen.

Exit. Short, uncomfortable pause.

CYPRIAN. Well, that was hardly necessary.

GOLDEN. I also must say, Professor —

BERNH. Don't you understand yet, gentlemen, that I will have nothing whatsoever to do with people who wish to make a political affair out of my case.

LOEWEN. But it is a political matter.

GOLDEN. Certainly, as matters have developed, you stand in the midst of a political conflict. And we really ought to welcome —

BERNH. I beg of you, Doctor, welcome nothing. I fight no political battle. The ridiculous war cry, which is rising up from all sides, will not tempt me to play a part which does not suit me and for which I do not feel competent, since I should only be playing a part. And as regards the time for consideration, Dr. Goldenthal, I should be obliged if you will consider it terminated.

GOLDEN. I do not understand —

BERNH. I wish to begin my term of imprisonment as quickly as possible. Preferably to-morrow.

CYPRIAN. But —

BERNH. I want to have the whole business behind me. That is the only thing that matters to me now. The whole of these past months are as good as wasted for my work and my profession. Nothing but conferences and hearings. And what has come of it all? As a legal question the whole thing was distasteful enough: now I am about to see it develop into a political storm. And from that I shall flee, to prison if there is no other refuge. My business is to cure people, or, at any rate to persuade them that I can do so. And to this I want to return with all possible speed.

LOEWEN. And your revenge?

BERNH. Who talks of revenge?

LOEWEN. Well, what about Flint and Ebenwald? Surely you won't let these gentlemen go scot-free.

BERNH. It will not be revenge — merely a settling up. But I do not intend to let a skirmish with these people suddenly become my life-work. Never fear. They will get their due.

CYPRIAN. Whether you wish to follow the matter up politically, or quite privately, I still maintain that it was not necessary to show this Kulka the door.

GOLDEN. I, also, should like to emphasize that the friendship of the publication which Dr. Kulka represents —

BERNH *(interrupting him).* My dear Doctor, one's enemies one must take as and where one finds them; my friends I can choose for myself — fortunately —

CURTAIN

ACT V



An office at the Ministry. Furnished suitably, not without comfort. Councillor Winkler, about 45, looks younger, slim, fresh countenance, small moustache, close-cut fair hair sprinkled with grey and sparkling blue eyes, alone, busy with documents. He gets up and places documents in drawer. Telephone bell.

COUNCILLOR *(goes back to table, speaking into telephone)*. This is the Ministry of Education. No, Councillor Winkler. Oh, Professor Ebenwald. He is not here yet. Perhaps in half an hour. He will certainly not go to Parliament before half-past one. Yes, I am sorry I can give no information about that, at any rate not on the 'phone. I shall be very pleased. Good day, Professor. *(Rings off; continues his previous occupation.) Messenger enters, brings post and a visiting-card.*

COUNCILLOR. Doctor Kulka?

MESSENGER. He wishes to see his Excellency in person.

COUNCILLOR. He must come again later, then.

MESSENGER. There were also two other journalists here earlier in the day. They are coming again, too.

COUNCILLOR. Well, you need not announce these newspaper men to me at all. They all want to see his Excellency in person.
Exit Messenger.

Telephone rings.

COUNCILLOR. This is the Ministry of Education. Councillor Winkler. Yes — ah, I think I know that voice. Charmed, dear lady. This evening? Yes, with pleasure, if at all possible. — I have nothing to say about the Election — No — I won't have pretty women bothering their heads about politics — Nobody understands them. — You have time for that in another twenty years, dear lady — *Au revoir.* Best regards to your husband. *(Rings off.)*

Messenger enters with card.

COUNCILLOR. What, another of them? Ah, Dr. Feuermann. Ask him in.
Exit Messenger. Enter Dr. Feuermann. Feuermann bows very low.

COUNCILLOR. Good day, Doctor. What brings you here?

FEUER. I come about a very serious matter, Councillor.

COUNCILLOR. Oh, I hope you have had no more accidents, Doctor, as the good sense of the worthy citizens of Ober-Hollabrunn has only just —

FEUER. It is true, Councillor, that I was acquitted. But what is the use of it? No patient comes near me. If I

stay in Ober-Hollabrunn as District Doctor, I shall simply starve. I am therefore putting in an application for a transfer, and —

Telephone rings.

COUNCILLOR. Excuse me, Doctor. *(Into telephone.)* Yes, Councillor Winkler speaking. Oh — What? No — You don't say so! Really! Sister Ludmilla. That is an extraordinary coincidence. Why, he is released to-day — Professor Bernhardi, of course. To-day, yes. You are coming round yourself? Yes. How extraordinary! Of course I will say nothing to his Excellency for the present, if you wish it. Good day. *(Rings off — at first very moved, then turns to Feuermann.)* Now, sir!

FEUER. And specially wished to seek for your support, Councillor — as you always —

Enter Flint.

FLINT. Good day, Councillor. *(Notices Feuermann.)* Ah!

FEUER *(bowing very low).* Excellency, my name is Dr. Feuermann.

FLINT. Ah yes — I know. From the Sunday paper.

COUNCILLOR *(aside).* As it happens, no journalist, your Excellency — Dr. Feuermann of Hollabrunn —

FLINT. Ah yes — Dr. Feuermann —

COUNCILLOR *(aside).* He was charged with a so-called technical error and acquitted.

FLINT. Yes, I remember. Professor Filitz made a brilliant report. Ten votes against two.

FEUER. Nine against —

FLINT. My congratulations, my dear Dr. Feuermann.

FEUER. I am deeply touched, Excellency, that my insignificant affair —

FLINT. No matter is insignificant to me. There must not be such a thing for one in my position. In a higher sense all matters are equally important.

(He glances casually, but seeking approval, at Winkler.)

And it may be some satisfaction to you to know that a thorough reform of medical study is under consideration, not unconnected with the impression made by your 'insignificant affair'. I hope it will be possible to effect this as a matter of routine. If only one did not have always to ask Parliament *(glance at Councillor)* how easy it would be to govern.

COUNCILLOR. At any rate much quicker, and that's the main thing.

FEUER. I took the liberty, your Excellency —

COUNCILLOR. I presume all that is included in your petition, Doctor.

FEUER. I would only like to say still —

COUNCILLOR. No doubt that is also written there —

FEUER. Oh, yes.

COUNCILLOR. Then let me have it, Doctor. It will be attended to as quickly as possible. Good day to you, Doctor.

FLINT *(who has meanwhile been handed some newspapers by the messenger).* Good day, Doctor. *(Shakes hands with Feuermann and Feuermann goes.)*

FLINT *(looking over a paper).* What does he really want?

COUNCILLOR. Application for a transfer, Excellency. Of course the poor devil is being boycotted in OberHollabrunn, in spite of the favourable verdict —

FLINT. Well, I suppose you yourself would hardly have him to attend you.

COUNCILLOR. Not if I were about to have a child, at any rate.

FLINT *(throwing newspaper aside angrily).* What other news is there?

COUNCILLOR. Professor Ebenwald telephoned. He will call in during the morning.

FLINT. What again? He was only here day before yesterday.

COUNCILLOR. Well, you see, they need money urgently in the Elizabeth Institute. They are up to their eyes in debt.

FLINT. Why, the Trustees withdrew their resignation after Bernhardi left.

COUNCILLOR. Yes, but you see it has since transpired that the only one who kept things a bit alive on the Committee was Bernhardi. Since he went they are all asleep. Even I.

FLINT. They must have a subvention. I promised it some time ago to Bernhardi.

COUNCILLOR. We have an enormous estimate this time, Excellency; we can't squeeze out more than three thousand. As it is, the Finance Minister is already angry with us. I am not at all sure yet whether we shall get the money for the new building for the Physiological Institute. And that is—'

FLINT. If we can't carry it through in the Budget statement — and a few other things as well — I shall ask for a special supplementary credit in Parliament.

COUNCILLOR. Oh!

FLINT. They won't refuse it. The Liberals and Social Democrats can't do it, as it would be cutting away the

ground under their own feet if they were suddenly to counsel the Government to economize on educational buildings. And as regards the Christian Socialist party, I should think I have the right to expect that they will make no difficulties. Don't you agree with me?

COUNCILLOR. Certainly these gentlemen have every cause for gratitude towards your Excellency.

FLINT. You are wide off the mark, Councillor. Gratitude is no factor in political life, it's more a matter of balancing accounts. Come to that, I have still to congratulate you on yesterday's County elections. Ten Social Democratic gains, that was more than one could expect.

COUNCILLOR. I would rather you reserved your congratulations until after the Parliamentary elections, your Excellency.

FLINT. The Parliamentary elections may have a different result, as the majorities yesterday were not exactly overwhelming. So don't triumph too soon, Sir Anarchist.

COUNCILLOR. You are treating me to rapid advancement, your Excellency. Just now I was distinguished by the title of 'Social Democrat'.

FLINT. No such great difference.

COUNCILLOR. I must not omit to offer you my congratulations on yesterday's speech.

FLINT. Speech. They were only a few improvised words. But they were effective.

COUNCILLOR. That is the general opinion. *(Pointing to the papers.)*

FLINT. Anyway, Councillor, it shows praiseworthy detachment on your part that you join in the congratulations. I was really afraid of you.

COUNCILLOR. You flatter me!

FLINT. For it seemed very unlikely to me, my dear Councillor, that you should be in favour of an increase in the hours devoted to religious education.

COUNCILLOR. And what about your Excellency?

FLINT. My dear Councillor, my private attitude towards this or that question is a separate story. Only political dilettantes would chatter freely about their own opinions. Conviction gives but a hollow ring to one's utterance. What is effective, even in politics, is the counterpoint.

COUNCILLOR. Until someone comes with a new melody, your Excellency.

FLINT. That's good. But to leave these metaphors and return to reality, do you really believe, my dear Councillor, that the people to-day are ripe, or ever will be ripe, for an existence without religion?

COUNCILLOR. What I understand by religion, your Excellency, can be learnt better anywhere else than in a bible class.

FLINT. Well, are you an Anarchist, my dear Councillor, or not?

COUNCILLOR. It seems your Excellency that a Civil Servant has no alternative but to be an anarchist — or a fool —

FLINT *(laughing).* Oh, I think you must concede a few intermediate steps. But, take my word for it, my dear Councillor, anarchy is a fruitless state of mind. I have also been through that phase. It is all over now. My present philosophy can be expressed in two words — work, achieve! Against this compelling demand, all else retreats into the background. And as I have all sorts of plans on hand, as you know, for which I need the support of Parliament, I am unfortunately forced to make concessions. The Anarchists also make them, my dear Councillor, otherwise they could not become Councillors. *(More seriously.)* But you are mistaken, if you think that such concessions always come easy. Or do you really think, my dear Councillor, that it was an easy matter for me to throw my old friend Bernhardi to the wolves. But it was unavoidable. One day the circumstances will become clear. They are all stored up in my mind. And should the time come when I can shake off certain people, well, I will say no more — but it will be understood one day that I am not a Minister for Education and Clericalism as some reporter chooses to call me to-day, in a so-called leading article.

COUNCILLOR. Ah!

FLINT. That phrase is quite after your heart, I suppose. And it isn't even his own. It comes from that worthy Pflugfelder who recently said it at one of those highly superfluous election meetings, where he found it necessary to drag out the Bernhardi affair. Altogether I find, my dear Councillor, that the authorities were sadly lacking in energy at some of these meetings.

COUNCILLOR. But the meeting at which Pflugfelder spoke was dispersed. What more can you want?

FLINT. Yes, but when? Only when Pflugfelder attacked the Archbishop for having transferred the Priest who spoke so favourably of Bernhardi, to somewhere on the Polish frontier.

COUNCILLOR. Well, naturally the Archbishops have higher protection from the Government than the Ministers of State.

FLINT. This Bernhardi affair. It seems the people won't let it die down. An absolutely perfidious article appeared lately in the *Worker,* your organ, Councillor.

COUNCILLOR. It was not badly written. But I have no organ and I am against all newspapers.

FLINT. Not more than I. And now even the Liberal papers, who did restrain themselves a little, have started to paint Bernhardi as a sort of martyr, a political sacrifice to clerical intrigues. Have you seen to-day's article in the *Topical News.* It is a veritable festive greeting to Bernhardi on the occasion of his release from prison. It is really a bit too strong.

COUNCILLOR. Bernhardi is innocent of it, at any rate.

FLINT. I am not so sure. He likes himself in the rôle. You are well aware that already in the third week of his imprisonment he was advised that a petition to His Majesty might no doubt be favourably received. You yourself undertook the mission to him.

COUNCILLOR. You know I did my best to persuade him, your Excellency. All the same it pleased me that he would not hear of applying for a pardon.

FLINT. Well, it would be a pity if he allowed his friends to drive him still deeper into a morass where he must always come off worst. For I am not at all inclined to let these intrigues continue much longer — and the Minister of Justice, to whom I broached the topic yesterday, is quite in agreement with me. We are dealing with a *Res Judicata,* and we are quite prepared, if necessary, to act without any consideration. And, if this should be necessary, I should be sorry for Bernhardi's sake. For, however unwisely he has behaved so far, and in spite of all the unpleasantness he has caused me, I still feel a certain sympathy for him here *(pointing to his heart.)* It seems that one can never rid oneself of such feelings.

COUNCILLOR. Of course, youthful friendship —

FLINT. Yes, that's just it. But anyone in my position ought to be quite free from such sentimentalities. After all, how does it affect the question that we were assistants together at Rappenweiler's twenty-five years ago, and that we went for walks together in the hospital gardens and confided our plans to each other? In my position one should have no memories, no heart if possible; we should walk over dead bodies — yes, my dear Winkler —

Messenger enters with card.

COUNCILLOR. Professor Ebenwald.

FLINT. Ask him in.
Exit Messenger.

FLINT. How much did you say we might ask for the Elizabeth Institute?

COUNCILLOR. Three thousand —
Enter Ebenwald. Bows.

FLINT. Good morning, my dear Professor. Or should I say Director?

EBEN. Not yet, your Excellency. Only temporary. It is not at all out of the question that Professor Bernhardi may be re-elected within the next few days. You know he was only suspended.

COUNCILLOR. There might be a hitch in a re-election. For, as matters stand at present, Bernhardi is neither Professor nor even Doctor.

EBEN. Oh well, there is no doubt that the civil penalties will soon be remitted. Thanks to the efforts of some of his friends, and a certain section of the Press there seems to be a revulsion of feeling in his favour. No doubt your Excellency is aware that he has just been escorted home in triumph from jail.

FLINT. What's that?

EBEN. Yes, my students have just told me about it.

FLINT. What does 'in triumph' mean?

EBEN. Well, it is said that a number of students met him at the prison gates and greeted him with cheers.

FLINT. All we need now is a torchlight procession.

COUNCILLOR. If your Excellency would like orders to be issued —

EBEN. If I may be permitted the remark, I think it extremely likely that these demonstrations are not unconnected with yesterday's election results.

FLINT. Do you think so? You may be right. You see, my dear Winkler, they are not to be regarded too lightly. Not that I would attach any particular importance to these demonstrations. No doubt they were Zionists.

EBEN. Even they are gaining some power ——

FLINT. Ah well! *(changing his tone).* You have come concerning the Subvention, Professor?

EBEN. Yes, your Excellency.

FLINT. Unfortunately we shall only be able to put a fraction of the anticipated sum at your disposal: on the other hand, however, I am able to report that the most earnest consideration is being given to the question of making the Elizabeth Institute a State organization.

EBEN. Your Excellency knows as well as I what a long road lies between consideration and decision.

FLINT. Quite true, my dear Professor. But you must not forget that we are dealing not only with the Elizabeth Institute and not only with the Faculty of Medicine, but with the whole immense field of education, secular and religious.

EBEN. And we members of the Elizabeth Institute dare to hope that your Excellency, who is one of us, an academic teacher and ornament of our faculty, will give your special attention to this branch of medical education, so sadly neglected by your predecessor.

FLINT *(to Winkler).* This man knows my weak point. My dear Professor, I have never forgotten that I am physician and teacher. One can change in every other particular — but once a doctor always a doctor. I will tell you something, Professor, but don't repeat it, else it might be used against me in Parliament, sometimes I am actually homesick for the laboratory and the hospital. It is quieter and pleasanter work, I can assure you. And if you achieve something there, then the results are evident. In work such as ours, in politics I mean, where it is left for a future generation —

Messenger brings card.

COUNCILLOR. Professor Tugendvetter.

FLINT. I will leave him to you, my dear Councillor. If you please, Professor —

TUGEND. Good day, Councillor. I won't keep you long. 'Gaily flows the work along by happy chatter sped eh? Well, I take the liberty of inquiring once more how my matter is progressing.

COUNCILLOR. It is well in hand, Professor.

TUGEND. I hardly need to tell you, Councillor, that to me personally the title is nothing. But you know, my dear Councillor, what women are —

COUNCILLOR. How should I know that, Professor?

TUGEND. Oh yes. 'Alone am I, but lonely never' — eh? Well, between ourselves, my wife is crazy for the title of 'Imperial Court Councillor'. She can hardly bear to wait any longer. And if it could possibly be managed by the first of June — you know that's my wife's birthday. I should like to present her with the title as a birthday offering.

COUNCILLOR. A cheap and practical birthday present, at any rate.

TUGEND. So, if you could do something to hasten the matter, my dear Councillor —

COUNCILLOR *(in a forced official manner)*. Unfortunately the Ministry of Education is not in a position to take any account of the Professors' personal affairs, or family matters, in their bestowal of titles, unless this should be provided for by a special mandate.

Messenger brings card.

COUNCILLOR *(astonished).* Ah!

MESSENGER. The gentleman would like to speak to his Excellency in person.

COUNCILLOR. There will be no objection to that, but it will be a special pleasure to me to see the Professor first in my office.

TUGEND. Am I in the way?

COUNCILLOR. A good friend of yours.

Enter Bernhardt.
Tugendvetter starts, astonished.

BERNH. Oh, you are not alone, Councillor?

TUGEND. Bernhardi!

COUNCILLOR *(shaking him warmly by the hand.)* I am very pleased to see you again, Professor.

BERNH. I am very pleased, too.

TUGEND. My greetings, Bernhardi. *(Holds out his hand to him.)*

BERNH *(takes his hand coolly).* Is his Excellency not to be seen?

COUNCILLOR. He won't be long. Take a seat, Professor.

TUGEND. Why, you — you look splendid. I — I — do you know that I absolutely forgot — how long is it since you —

COUNCILLOR *(to Bernhardt).* I must congratulate you on the ovations which you received earlier in the day.

TUGEND. Ova —

BERNH. You have already heard of it. But 'ovations' is rather too strong a term.

COUNCILLOR. There is even talk of a torchlight procession in front of your windows to-night — and of a serenade by the Brigittenau Freethinkers.

TUGEND. You know, my dear Bernhardi, it absolutely slipped my memory that your term of imprisonment was up to-day. Why, how quickly two months pass, after all!

BERNH. Especially for free men.

TUGEND. But you really do look splendid. Doesn't he, Councillor? If he had been to the Riviera he could not look better. Fresh as from a holiday.

COUNCILLOR. Perhaps you would like to commit a small act of sacrilege, Professor, then I could promise you as cheap a holiday.

TUGEND *(laughs).* My best thanks.

BERNH. I really did not have such a bad time. A guardian angel watched over me — the bad consciences of the people who got me there.

TUGEND. I am glad of the opportunity to tell you that my sympathies in this affair were always entirely on your side.

BERNH. Have you really found the opportunity at last? I'm glad of that.

TUGEND. I hope you never doubted that I —

BERNH. Would it not be possible to announce me to his Excellency? It is rather an urgent matter.

COUNCILLOR. I expect his Excellency will be here directly.

TUGEND. Do you know what I heard only the other day? I heard that you are going to write a history of your whole affair.

BERNH. IS that what people are saying?

COUNCILLOR. That should make an interesting book. You have had plenty of opportunity to get to know people; inside and out.

BERNH. As a matter of fact, my dear Councillor, I knew them pretty well before and, after all, it is not a very

surprising matter if people treat you shabbily because they dislike you, or because they can draw some personal advantage from their behaviour. Only one class of people are still a mystery to me —

TUGEND. Namely —

BERNH. The people of impersonal malice. Those who behave badly, not for the slightest personal advantage, but out of pure pleasure in doing so.

FLINT *(quickly self-possessed).* Oh, Bernhardi.

EBEN *(also quickly self-possessed).* Good day, Professor.

BERNH. Good day, Professor. No doubt you are here in connection with the Elizabeth Institute?

EBEN. That is so.

FLINT. It is a question of a subvention —

BERNH. I always knew that the interests of my work would be well guarded by you, Professor — for the duration of my absence.

EBEN. Thank you for the testimonial, Professor.

FLINT *(to Bernhardi).* You wish to speak to me, Bernhardi?

BERNH. I shall not keep you very long.

COUNCILLOR *(to Ebenwald and Tugendvetter).* May I ask you, gentlemen —
Exit with the two others.

FLINT *(quickly coming to a decision).* I gladly take this opportunity, my dear Bernhardi, of congratulating you upon your release from prison. Unfortunately my official position forbade my conveying to you my painful astonishment at the result of your trial; it will, therefore, give me all the more pleasure, now that the business is over, to be of service to you in any possible way.

BERNH. Very kind of you, my dear Flint. As a matter of fact I have come to ask a favour of you.

FLINT. I am all attention.

BERNH. This is how matters stand. Prince Konstantin is seriously ill and has sent for me.

FLINT. Well — But I cannot see —

BERNH. He has sent for me as his doctor. I am to treat his case.

FLINT. Well, what hinders you?

BERNH. What hinders me? I don’t want to become guilty of a new breach of the Law.

FLINT. A breach of the Law?

BERNH. You know how matters stand. It would be quack doctoring if I undertook the treatment of Prince Konstantin again. As I was misguided enough to commit an act of sacrilege and was convicted for it, I have lost my diploma and the right to practise medicine. And therefore, I have taken the liberty of bringing here in person my petition for the remission of the civil penalties attached to my conviction. I come to you, my old friend who, as has been shown in other cases, are in a position somewhat to influence the decisions of the Minister of Justice, and, at the same time I ask you to speed the matter as far as possible, so that, in the case of my request being granted, the Prince should not be kept waiting too long.

FLINT. I see. I see. You have come here to mock at me —

BERNH. How so? I am only doing the correct thing. I have no desire whatever to be locked up again, although I had a comparatively easy time. So, if you will have the kindness — *(Hands him the petition.)*

FLINT. It is granted. I take all responsibility on myself. There is no reason whatever why you should not respond immediately to Prince Konstantin's call. I give you my word that no consequences of a penal nature will devolve upon you. Is that enough for you?

BERNH. It should be, as in this case no unpleasant consequences for you are likely to be bound up with the keeping of your word.

FLINT. Bernhardi!

BERNH. Your Excellency.

FLINT *(quickly at his ease).* Well, wasn't I right, my friend? Didn't I know at once that it was not for Prince Konstantin's sake you came here? But well and good. Let us spare a little time to discuss this matter at which you are hinting. In any case, we wouldn't avoid the subject. So you accuse me of breaking my word.

BERNH. I do, my dear Flint.

FLINT. And do you know my answer to that? That I have never broken my word. For the only promise I gave you was this — that I would intercede on your behalf. And I could do that in no better way than to bring your case to the light of day by process of the Law. Further, even had I done that which you call 'breaking my word', it would be foolish of you to reproach me with it, as you were a lost man in any case even had I kept my word. There was already a civil summons out against you and the trial could no longer have been avoided. Finally, however, you must understand that there is a higher aim in public life than to keep one's word, as you call it. And that is to keep one's goal in view, not to be turned aside from one's life-work. Never was I more keenly aware of this than at that remarkable moment when I was about to take up the cudgels for you and felt the ill humour, the distrust and the embitterment of the House welling up towards me and when, by a happy turn, I was able to calm the storm, to smooth the waves, and to become master of the situation.

BERNH. 'Turn' is an apt description.

FLINT. My dear Bernhardi, I had only two alternatives, as I recognized at that moment in a flash, either to plunge into an abyss with you, which would have been a crime towards myself, towards my mission and perhaps even to the State — or to give up a man who was lost in any case. And by accepting the latter course,

I preserved the possibility of building new Institutes, of reorganizing the curriculum of the various faculties in a manner suited to modern requirements, to raise the health of the people, to effect, or at any rate pave the way, for the most varied reforms in our intellectual life which, as you will admit yourself one day, are not too dearly paid for by two months' imprisonment. For I hope you do not think that I am particularly impressed by your martyrdom. Had it been for anything great that you endured these various discomforts, which are after all cancelled out now by a number of small triumphs, had it been for an ideal, for your fatherland, for your faith, then it might have evoked respect in me. But I see in your whole behaviour — as an old friend you will permit me the remark — nothing but a tragi-comedy of obstinacy, and I also make bold to doubt whether you would have carried it through with the same consistency if the flames still reached to heaven round the stake in Austria.

Bernhardi looks at him for a while, then begins to clap.

FLINT. What the —?

BERNH. Oh, I thought you might miss it.

FLINT. And have you no answer except this mediocre joke?

BERNH. What answers I could give you, you know as well as I do; and — as an old friend I may say it — you could find words for it better than I. So what use would it be for me to reply to you — here between four walls.

FLINT. I see. I see. Well, you must not think that the Ministry is unaware of the plans you are brewing. I only ask myself to what, under these circumstances, I owe the honour of your personal call. For I can hardly think that Prince Konstantin —

BERNH. Perhaps I was a little too thorough, my friend. It naturally interests me to know what explanation you can give for your behaviour towards me. And this entertainment between his Excellency and the discharged jailbird should make a quite effective closing chapter for a certain book, if the writing of it were worth while.

FLINT. Oh, I hope you will not be held back from it. It might serve as your election address right away.

BERNH. Election address?

FLINT. Oh, it is certainly only a question of days or even hours till you are offered a constituency.

BERNH. My dear Flint, I think I shall continue to leave the sphere of politics entirely to you.

FLINT. Politics! Politics! I wish you would leave me alone with that. The devil take politics! I accepted office merely because I knew that there is no one else in Austria to-day who can do what, after all, must be done. But even if I am destined to introduce a new era, these few years — or months — of office, will only remain an episode in my life. I have always known that, and from day to day I feel it more strongly. I am a physician, a teacher, I yearn for patients, for students —

Enter Winkler.

WINKLER. I beg your pardon, Excellency, for taking the liberty — but I have just received a very important communication from the Ministry of Justice — and as it concerns Professor Bernhardi's case —

BERNH. My case?

WINKLER. Yes. Sister Ludmilla, the Crown witness in your case, has made a statement, in which she accuses herself of having given false evidence at the hearing —

BERNH. Accuses herself —

FLINT. What, in Heaven's name —

WINKLER. Councillor Berman of the Ministry of Justice will be here shortly to give you a full report. But there is no doubt about the facts. Sister Ludmilla's written statement is at the Ministry.

FLINT. At the Ministry?

WINKLER. And of course, Professor, you will immediately reopen proceedings.

BERNH. Reopen proceedings?

WINKLER. Naturally.

BERNH. Not if I know it!

FLINT. Ah!

BERNH. To what end? Am I to go through the whole farce again? Under another guise? Every sensible man knows that I went to prison an innocent man. And no one can give me back my two months.

FLINT. Those two months! Always the two months. As though that were the point. Higher values are at stake here. You have no sense of justice, Bernhardi.

BERNH. Obviously.

FLINT. Do you know any further particulars, Councillor?

WINKLER. Not many. The most peculiar feature of the case is that, according to the Sister's statement, she first made the confession of her false evidence to her Father Confessor, who urged her to mitigate the consequences of her sin to the best of her powers.

FLINT. The Father Confessor?

WINKLER. Evidently he had no idea to what the matter referred —

FLINT. Indeed! How can you say that?

BERNH. To face the Court again? I would sooner certify the Sister as highly hysterical and unaccountable for her actions.

FLINT. That would be like you.

BERNH. Much satisfaction it would be to me to have this person locked up after the event —

WINKLER. But someone else might meet with the same fate. A certain gentleman called Hochroitzpointner might fare badly, especially as Nemesis is threatening him from another quarter also.

BERNH. Nemesis, in this case, no doubt, bearing the name of Kurt Pflugfelder?

WINKLER. I think so.

FLINT. You seem to be remarkably well informed.

WINKLER. My duty, your Excellency!

BERNH. I am sure that worm is not worth the waste of time. That our good Kurt, who might also find something better to do —

FLINT *(who has been walking up and down).* In Confession — that should give food for thought. Perhaps it will appear that Catholic customs may sometimes have beneficent results for members of other faiths also.

BERNH. I can dispense with the beneficent results. I want peace and quiet.

COUNCILLOR. It is to be assumed, Professor, that the renewal of the proceedings will not depend entirely on you. They will probably take their course, with or without you.

BERNH. Then it will have to be without me.

FLINT. I must point out to you, Bernhardi, that this matter is not to be decided entirely by your convenience. And it would certainly make an extraordinary impression if now, when the right path lies open to you, you were to choose a less worthy way to attain justice — to become entangled with people of all classes — reporters —

BERNH. I take no way at all. I have had my fill. For me the matter is closed.

FLINT. Dear! dear!

BERNH. Completely closed.

FLINT. So suddenly? And I even heard that you were to write a pamphlet on the subject or a whole book. Isn't that so, Councillor? You heard —

BERNH. I see that it is no longer necessary. And if the case is tried again my statement from the first trial is available. I have nothing at all to add to it. And this time I will dispense with his Excellency's evidence.

FLINT. Is that so? But you can hardly avoid it if I, myself, consider it my duty to appear at Court. The world will understand; even you, Bernhardi must see it eventually, that from the outset my aim has always been to bring clarity into the situation. The first trial was absolutely necessary, for otherwise how could we have attained this second one, which will at last bring the affair completely into the light. And perhaps, Bernhardi,

it is wisest to keep some ammunition in reserve. *(Points to his breast pocket.)*

BERNH. What is that?

FLINT. A letter, my friend. A certain letter which may perhaps do service in the fight which is impending. Your letter!

BERNH. Oh, my letter — I really thought it was perhaps — your article.

FLINT. What article?

BERNH. The famous one of your youth: 'Houses of Prayer — Houses of Healing' —

FLINT. Oh, that —

Winkler makes a questioning gesture.

FLINT. Yes, Councillor, of my — my revolutionary youth. If it interests you I will look it out some day ——

BERNH. Oh, it exists, then?

FLINT *(his hand to his forehead).* No! What tricks memory can play one — why I never wrote it — But who knows perhaps before long I shall have occasion to — declaim it.

Enter Servant.

SERVANT. Councillor Berman wishes to see your Excellency in person —

FLINT. Ah! *(To Bernhardi.)* Would you mind waiting just a little while?

BERNH. Yes, but Prince Konstantin —

FLINT. Has waited two months for you. Another half-hour won't make much difference. Keep him till I come back, my dear Winkler. Perhaps we shall have to discuss a joint move. I suppose I can ask this little favour of you, Bernhardi?
Exit.

WINKLER. So Prince Konstantin has sent for you, Professor. To-day already? That's like him!

BERNH. I shall only go there to ask him to do without my attendance for a time. I shall seek refuge in flight from these possible developments.

WINKLER. I fear you would have to stay away longer than your numerous patients would care for. For the whole affair is taking a fresh lease of life now, Professor — and it may last a very long time.

BERNH. Well, what can I do, then?

WINKLER. One becomes inured to it. In time it may even be a matter for pride.

BERNH. Proud? I? You can hardly imagine? Councillor, how ridiculous I appear to myself. It started this

morning — with the reception at the prison door — then the article in the *Topical News.* Have you read it? I was really ashamed. And all my plans melted away in this tepid sense of the ridiculous.

WINKLER. Plans —? You mean — your book —

BERNH. Not that exactly. That plan faded away much earlier. When I started writing it in the leisured seclusion of my prison cell, I still felt the heat of anger, but gradually this evaporated more and more. The denunciation of Flint and Co. became — I can hardly say myself how it happened — perhaps in recollection of a certain incident — something in the nature of a philosophic treatise.

WINKLER. I am afraid your publisher will find little pleasure in that.

BERNH. The problem was no longer one of Austrian politics, or any kind of politics; all at once it seemed as though the broadest ethical issues were at stake; responsibility and revelation, and finally the question of free will —

WINKLER. Oh yes, you always end up with that if you dig down to the root of things. But it's better to break off before you get so far, otherwise one fine day it may happen that you begin to understand everything and forgive everything — and once you can neither love nor hate, what charm remains in life?

BERNH. Oh, you continue to love and hate, my dear Winkler! But all the same you can imagine that not much room was left in my book for his Excellency, Minister Flint. Then I made up my mind that if he could not read my grievances in black and white, at least he should hear them from me by word of mouth.

WINKLER. And to this we owe the pleasure of your visit?

BERNH. Yes, it was my intention to tell him to his face — well, you can pretty well imagine what. This was my intention this morning still, when I woke up in prison for the last time. But then came the ovations, that leading article and letters that I found at home. Then my only thought was to hasten to face my old friend while I could still retain some sense of gravity for the great reckoning. But when I did at last stand face to face with him, the last remnant of resentment flickered out. You should have heard him talk! It was impossible to be angry with him. I am beginning to think that I never really was so.

WINKLER. The Minister was always fond of you also. I can assure you of that.

BERNH. And now this business with Sister Ludmilla — and the prospect of renewed litigation. You must realize, my dear Winkler, that to come to myself at all and to regain the slightest self-respect, I must flee from all this commotion which is now buzzing around me for the simple reason that the world has at last found out that I was in the right —

WINKLER. What an idea, Professor! No man has ever become popular merely through being in the right. His popularity only arises when it suits some political party to think him right. Moreover, Professor, it is purely imagination on your part to think that you were right.

BERNH. What's that? Imagination that I Have I heard you aright?

WINKLER. Oh yes, I think you have.

BERNH. You think, Councillor —? You must really explain that. In your opinion I should have let his Reverence —

WINKLER. Certainly you should have, my dear Professor. Undoubtedly you were not born to be a reformer —

BERNH. Reformer —? My dear sir —

WINKLER. As little as I We have not the inner conviction to follow up our principles to the final consequences — to give up our lives, if necessary, for our convictions. And therefore the best thing, in fact the only decent thing, is for men of our mettle — to leave such matters severely alone —

BERNH. But —

WINKLER. No good results from meddling. What end would have been attained after all, my dear Professor, had you spared that poor creature a last shock on her death-bed? It seems much the same to me as trying to solve all social problems by making some poor devil a present of a villa.

BERNH. You forget only one thing, my dear Winkler, as everyone else seems to — that I had not the remotest intention of solving any problem whatever. I simply did what I held to be right in one specific instance.

WINKLER. That is where you went wrong. If we always did only the right thing, or rather started off one day at breakfast time, without further reflection, to do only the right thing all day long, we should certainly land in jail before supper time.

BERNH. And shall I tell you something, Councillor? In my place you would have acted exactly as I did.

WINKLER. Possibly. Then I should have been — you'll forgive me, Professor — just such an ass as you —

CURTAIN

Comedies of Words (1917)



Original German Title: 'Komödie der Worte'

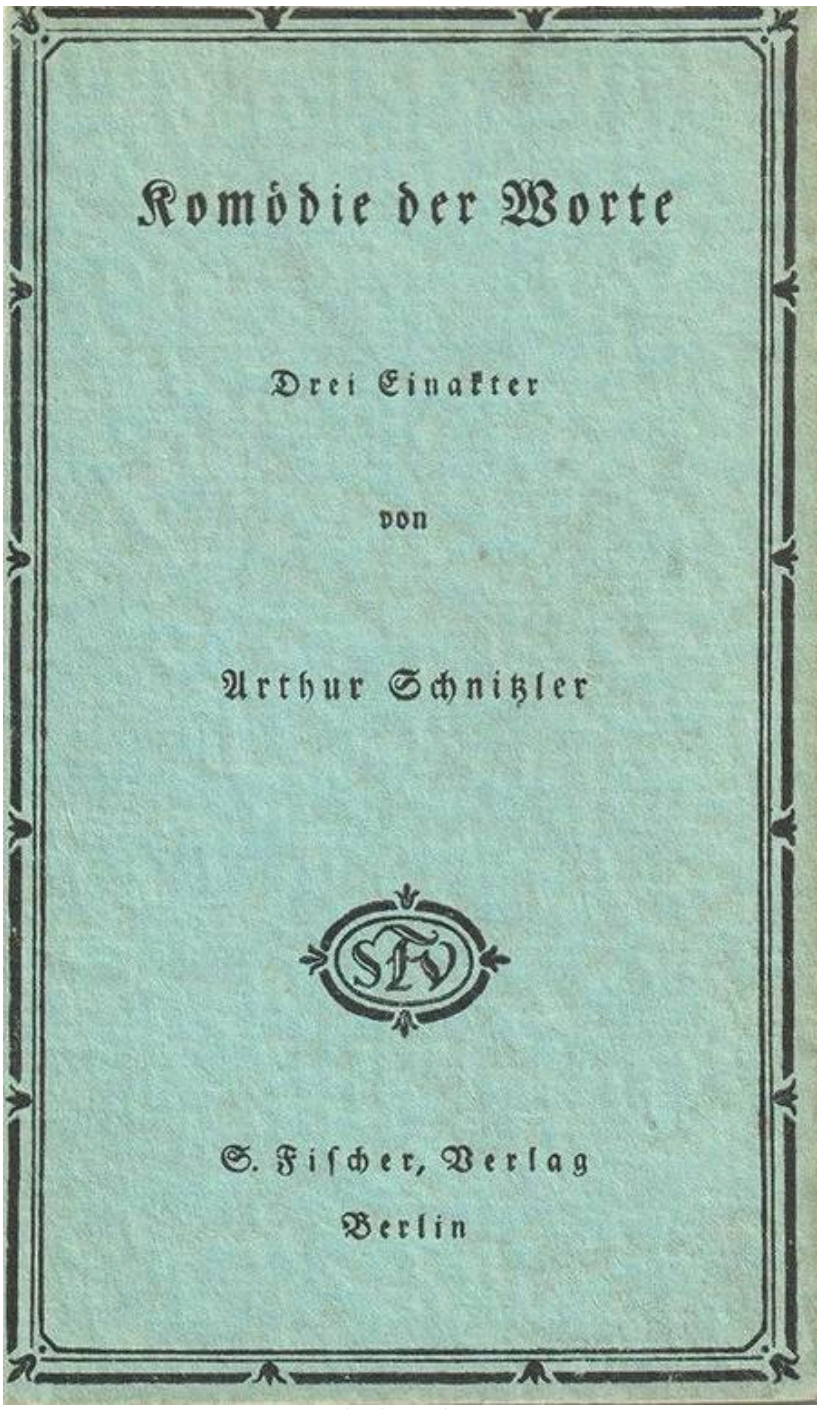
Translated by Pierre Loving, 1923

From the beginning of the twentieth century, Schnitzler was among the most frequently performed playwrights on German stages. However, with the outbreak of the First World War, interest in his works declined. This was partly due to the fact that, as one of the few Austrian intellectuals, he was not enthusiastic about the war effort and made no bellicose pronouncements.

One of his last dramas, *Komödie der Worte* comprises three one-act plays "The Hour of Recognition," "The Big Scene," and "The Bacchus Festival". Written between 1913 and 1914, they were published in a single volume by S. Fischer in Berlin in 1915. The cycle premiered on 12 October 1915 at the Burgtheater and simultaneously at the Darmstadt Court Theatre and the New Theatre in Frankfurt am Main.

The first part, *The Hour of Recognition*, concerns Doctor Carl Eckold and his wife Clara, whose only child, Bettina, has left home following her marriage. Now, the parents must finally confront each other. Ten years earlier, Clara had committed adultery. Her husband had noticed, but remained silent for the sake of their child. Full of festering scorn and hatred, he blurts out his view of their deceitful coexistence. She resists with all her might, trying in vain to save the marriage and finally leaves her husband.

After the Vienna premiere, Schnitzler noted in his diary: "…the people weren't quite sure whether they liked it." His friend Brandes wrote to him in December 1915: "Tragic and comic elements are mixed, as is your custom." Some critics consider *The Hour of Recognition* to be one of the playwright's analytical masterpieces, employing once more the technique of supplying to the audience incomplete information, which is so characteristic of much of his work.



The first edition

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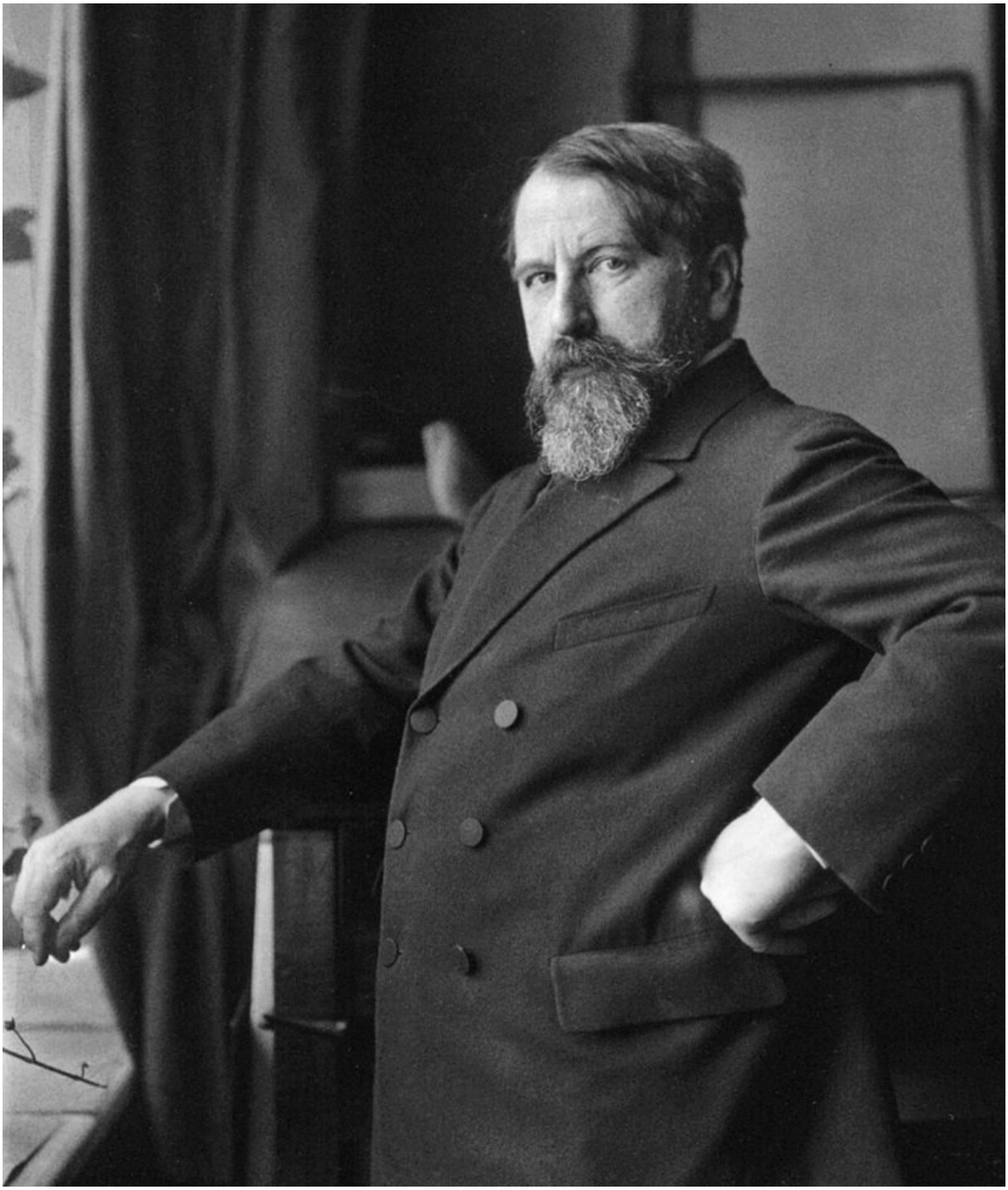
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PERSONS

THE FESTIVAL OF BACCHUS



Schnitzler, 1912

PART I. THE HOUR OF RECOGNITION

PERSONS



CARL ECKOLD, M.D.

CLARA, *his wife*.

PROFESSOR RUDOLPH ORMIN.

MAID AT THE ECKOLDS

SERVINGMAN AT THE ECKOLDS

THE HOUR OF RECOGNITION



[SCENE: DINING ROOM in the home of Dr. Eckold, Vienna. A door in the rear conducts to an ante-room or vestibule; another pierced in the right wall opens to the waiting-room, still another on the left leads to the other living rooms. The furniture is comfortable but old-fashioned.

Discovered, Dr. Carl Eckold, a man of, say 45, with a dark brown square-cut beard, inclining to baldness. He wears a pince-nez for reading purposes. Also, Clara, his wife, 40, still pretty. Both are seated at the table finishing their dessert.
The servingman comes in with a card.]

SERVINGMAN. The lady begs to be admitted at once, if possible.

ECKOLD *[deliberately turning the card between his fingers].* My hours, as announced, start at three. It is scarcely half past two now. Ask the lady to be patient. Anybody else waiting?

SERVINGMAN. Three patients already, sir.

ECKOLD. H'm! I shall take them in the order of their arrival.

[Servingman goes of. The maid serves the coffee, which Clara pours into the cups.]

ECKOLD. Why, you've laid three covers, Clara. Have you forgotten that our Miss Bettina, or, to do her nibs justice, Mrs. Bettina Wöhrmann, dines in Salzburg today? Perhaps in Zurich? Perhaps — Heaven only knows where?

CLARA. NO. I haven't forgotten, Carl. The extra cover was laid for Ormin.

ECKOLD. Ah, yes. Made his apologies over the telephone, has he?

CLARA. No, nothing definite. Besides, I know he is coming to bid us good-bye.

ECKOLD. Terribly busy, I suppose, with this long journey in front of him. Will you call me when he comes? I want to pay my respects in person. *[Rises, striding over to the right, turning half-way.]* Are you going out?

CLARA. No, I've nothing particular on for tonight. Why do you ask? Anything you wish to consult me about?

ECKOLD. Nothing out of the ordinary. There's no hurry at all. Well — *[glances at the clock, making for the door, right. The servingman enters with telegram and newspaper. Eckold steps toward him, taking the telegram. The servingman places the newspaper on the table.]*

ECKOLD *[opening the telegram].* From Bettina.

CLARA *[going up to him, eagerly.]* Oh, already?

ECKOLD. From Bettina and Hugo, of course. *[Clara reads over his shoulder.]*

ECKOLD. From Innsbruck.

CLARA. They didn't squander a round minute. Piled into a cab directly after the wedding supper and whipped to the station.

ECKOLD. Quite a sensible idea, that!

CLARA *[reading],* "Tomorrow Zurich. Day after tomorrow we expect to have a word from you at Luzerne, Palace Hotel."

ECKOLD. "A thousand regards."

CLARA. The identical route we travelled twenty-two years ago. Only we weren't so hotfoot to reach Innsbruck.

ECKOLD *[without twitching a muscle of his face].* Modern tempo, I guess. And we didn't stop at the Palace Hotel, either.

CLARA. It wasn't up then.

ECKOLD. Even if it had been —

CLARA. It was glorious, all the same — without the Palace, I mean.

ECKOLD. Ah, but Bettina's struck better luck than you.

CLARA. Now — *[touching his arm gently.]* ECKOLD *[moving away from her. Alongside the table, nonchalantly fluttering the newspaper].* I don't reproach myself in any way when I affirm that. A paternal million, let me tell you, isn't to be ground down with the heel of one's foot. Especially when the stars fight in their courses for you, which really is the case with your son-in-law. *[Glancing at the newspaper.]* Here's something about Ormin, by the way *[reading]* "The regular sanitation corps under the leadership of Rudolph Ormin, Royal and Imperial Professor, of the Austrian Red Cross, will leave Vienna this evening on the eight twenty express. At Trieste it will board the Austrian Lloyd liner Amphitrite, sailing for Japan, and thence will repair to the war zone." *[He holds out the newspaper to her, scrutinizing her face closely as she peruses the column.]* Not bad at all, that. *[Site.]*

CLARA *[still standing].* You ploughed through something of the sort once.

ECKOLD. Bosnia —? There's no comparison — really.

CLARA. But it was a kind of war, wasn't it?

ECKOLD. Kind of? Not merely a "kind of," but a bona fide war, I assure you. You might have gathered that from my diary. I let you read it then. Surely you remember?

CLARA *[laughing].* Certainly, I remember.

ECKOLD. From the steep mountain slopes they fired on us where we were huddled below. Little heed they gave to the Red Cross. Sanitation corps or no, be damned to you! *[Changing his tone.]* Ah, but it's jolly good going through it with the brevet of a superior — like Ormin, for instance! At the time I was only a callow surgeon. I had just taken my degree. Nowadays I am utterly unqualified for such an undertaking. It calls for more elasticity in a man, more idealism, in a certain sense, more youth.

CLARA. Ormin is two years older than you.
And, moreover, it's rumored his heart's not perfectly fit.

ECKOLD. But it's not a question of years, not even of health. What keeps one in good fettle is success, recognition, fame.

CLARA. Perhaps if you had adopted an academic career —

ECKOLD. Oh, of course. The difference in the nature of our endowments, Ormin's and mine, isn't so big that you can notice it. It was due to other things. Of that I am sure. Over and above all things else, Ormin possesses innate gaiety of spirit. There's the rub. The spiritual urge, as it were. Then you've got to give the man credit for some superficiality. That's an attribute you must be born with. It's not to be acquired, no matter how hard you try.

CLARA. Somehow he never needed to drum up a practice.

ECKOLD. Neither did I. Years ago, when he and I were young physicians, financially he was no better off than I. No better off than I. What's the good of paltering with the truth. Like mine in all respects, his lot was one of worriment and struggle.

CLARA. Yes, but for himself alone.

ECKOLD. Of course, when he married his anxieties were increased. What do you expect? A good deal has to be discounted — always. Were he to die one of these days Mrs. Melanie would not be so wonderfully provided for.

CLARA. Since she's not legally divorced, she gets her allowance just the same.

ECKOLD. Allowance! About two thousand crowns. And that, as you know, doesn't go a great way with dear Melanie. She used to spend as much as that on gloves and hats alone. At least that was ——

CLARA. Really, I think she was maligned more than she deserved. Society is horribly stony-hearted towards the wives of great men.

ECKOLD. Great? Pshaw. You mean, famous. Well, thank Heaven, you're spared such treatment. Now — *[Is about to go when Professor Ormin comes in. He is a clean-shaven man of about 50, with a haggard, sharply-chiselled face.]*

ORMIN. How d'ye do. I trust sincerely you haven't waited until now with the dinner. *[Kisses the tips of Clarets fingers and shakes hands with Eckold.]*

ORMIN. I've dined already, thank you.

CLARA. You must take a cup of coffee —

ORMIN. Thanks. Don't let me put you out, though. *[Clara rings and gives an order to the maid who has entered.]*

ECKOLD. Delighted to see you once again before you leave. This evening, eh? And then on the *Amphitrite?*

ORMIN. Yes.

ECKOLD. Here 'tis in the paper. Ah, but you're going to have a fine passage. In June — by the by, when do you expect to be at the front — on duty, I mean.

ORMIN. In four weeks. But I think it'll take us considerably longer to get to the actual war zone.

ECKOLD. Who knows, old man, but all may be settled before you arrive.

ORMIN. Settled? Why, it's scarcely begun. And judging from all appearances, things will be rather long drawn out. *[The maid brings the coffee and Clara pours it into the cup. The maid goes out.]*

ECKOLD. Are you taking an assistant along?

ORMIN. Yes, Marenzeller Kleinert's picked to take my place in the clinic. *[Sipping his coffee.]* Do you know who's sailing with us? Guess. On the *Amphitrite,* too. Our good old friend, Floding.

ECKOLD. Floding? I suppose he's aged a food deal. Grown virtuous, has he? Not likely, guess. Virtue as a rule is more elusive than age.

CLARA. In what capacity is Floding going to Japan?

ECKOLD. In the capacity of correspondent —

ORMIN. Yes, for the *Rhenish News.* So he writes me.

CLARA. You keep in touch with him?

ORMIN. Not very regularly. But since last summer, when we were accidentally thrown so much in each other's company — after many years — I've already told you all about it.

CLARA. Nowadays we never hear from him. If you hadn't brought his respects from Helgoland ——

ECKOLD. What's he going to write us for? It's ten years now that he left Vienna.

ORMIN. He refers to you habitually as one of his closest friends.

ECKOLD. Friends? *[Pause.]* I doubt whether I really owned a friend. Perhaps — you.

ORMIN. Oh, a good many. Possibly you make overstrict demands.

ECKOLD. Why make demands at all? Seldom, if ever, are any of them met.

ORMIN *[jestingly to Clara'. What's come over your husband, eh? [Recollecting.]* Oh, yes; his daughterkin. By God, I miss her, too. Have you had a line from her yet? No? It's hardly likely so soon.

CLARA. We received a telegram just this minute.

ECKOLD. From Innsbruck.

CLARA. Tomorrow they reach Zurich, day after tomorrow Luzerne.

ORMIN. And in the course of three weeks, I suppose, you will welcome her back home.

CLARA. Unfortunately, no. After the honeymoon they plan to move to Berlin.

ORMIN. Indeed. Is Wormann needed that bad in Berlin?

ECKOLD. Yes, now that his predecessor has been appointed Professor Extraordinary to Breslau —

ORMIN. Quite so. Oh, he'll carve out a ripping career for himself, your son-in-law will. With twenty-eight assistants at the Physiological Institute — and highly deserving of it all, let me add.

CLARA. I see no reason why it couldn't be over here just as well.

ORMIN. After all, the distance between Berlin and Vienna isn't so great.

CLARA. Just fancy! Day before yesterday she sat here with us. For seventeen years she sat in the self-same place. *[Pause.]* Dear me! All these sentimental after-thoughts, I'm afraid, won't help a bit. But the wrench is — so deep!

ORMIN. I never thought you'd take it to heart this way. All fathers and mothers must steel themselves against this sort of thing.

CLARA. Of what use is your steeling yourself against it?

ECKOLD. Yes, of what use? It's infinitely better to have no children at all.

CLARA *[almost frightened]*. What a thing to say!

ECKOLD *[impenetrably]*. I say it again.

ORMIN *[tactfully]*. Well — *[Pause]*. Now what else did I want to tell you? Oh, yes. One of the nurses of the Red Cross accompanying my expedition is — don't start I — Madame Melanie Ormin.

CLARA. Ah!

ECKOLD. Your wife?

ORMIN. My — wife that was, yes.

ECKOLD. Old man, sure as fate, you're going to come back with all your differences patched up.

ORMIN. Not a bit of it.

CLARA. Don't forget to remember me to Melanie, when you see her.

ORMIN. You are kindly disposed to her, aren't you? —

CLARA. We always got along very nicely together. You know that.

ECKOLD. Please remember me, too. And don't omit Floding, either. You can tell him from me it's a symptom of ungratefulness not to let himself be heard from, especially after such a bully friendship as he claims existed between us.

ORMIN. You demand, my dear Carl, more than you give. Why, you've chucked him on your own account. What do you expect?

CLARA. But, really, he liked him.

ECKOLD. Liked him? You exaggerate. He interested me. Quite an amusing cut-up, he was. Wicked and sentimental.

ORMIN. Not such an odd combination, by a long shot. That is, as far as wags who are niggardly endowed go.

ECKOLD. Niggardly endowed? You mean his halt foot. Ah, but don't you see that's why he was vouchsafed such beautiful blue eyes.

ORMIN. It's hardly the most striking paradox in his make-up. What's worse, is the fact that he possesses a poetical soul, coupled with not an ounce *of* poetic talent. That kind of thing spells the ruin of a man.

CLARA. I remember several lovely poems he wrote once.

ORMIN. Up to a certain age nobody objects strenuously to that. But, you see, he persists in turning them out still. Last summer — just to cite an instance — he recited several to me. CLARA. Well?

ORMIN. The surf was simply deafening. I must beg to be excused from any criticism. *[Enter servingman with a card.]*

ECKOLD *[taking the card].* Excuse me. Praxis aurea, you know. Don't go until I return.

ORMIN. Can't promise that I'll stay that long, Carl. I've got to attend to several things before my departure.

ECKOLD. Won't you keep my wife company for a quarter of an hour or so? Call me when you're going. Now don't take yourself off uncivilly. Well, auf Wiedersehen. *[Goes out right.]*

CLARA *[breaking in suddenly].* This is nice, Melanie's sailing with you that way!

ORMIN. Not with me. It just happens that she's a member of the party.

CLARA. Well, if it weren't for you the idea would never have occurred to her.

ORMIN. It's idle to conjecture about that. It's bewildering all the things she's put her hand to, and carried through, too, since we separated.

CLARA. Has she been living in Vienna recently?

ORMIN. Yes, and quite an age for her. Just fancy only three months ago she returned from Madeira, where I understood she kept a foreign *pension.*

CLARA. I was under the impression she had tried her luck in America.

ORMIN. Quite an old story, that. Do you know that she was on the stage over there? Played in English, mind you. It came to my ears only the other day. She seems to have been tremendously versatile in her way.

CLARA. Quite a remarkable creature, I must say. Perhaps you will be happy with her yet. ORMIN. I —

CLARA. Fifteen years ago you may have been unfit for married life.

ORMIN. On the contrary, I was always fit. Only I didn't happen to meet the right woman. *[Simply.]* I made her acquaintance — several years too late.

CLARA *[smiling].* You'd have tired of the right woman just as you did of Melanie.

ORMIN. Why do you think so? I did not tire of Melanie. That's a mistaken notion of yours. We just — Melanie and I — after a certain period took to making separate trips. Objectively, I know, it has the appearance of tiring of one another. But it wasn't my fault. I am very strong for marital fidelity. At least I am sure of this much: I was destined to the domestic sphere. More so than Carl, for instance.

CLARA. More so than Carl — you?

ORMIN. Certainly. In him, lurking deep within, there broods a suggestion of the out-and-out undomestic creature. Yes, the genius of the philanderer.

CLARA *[smiling].* In Carl?

ORMIN. Yes, in your husband, the practicing physician, whose consultation hours are between three and four.

CLARA *[shaking her head incredulously].* Do you call yourself a student of human nature?

ORMIN. Knowledge of human nature is an assumption for the most part. Not always accurate nor pleasant, either. But, quite seriously, we have lived, both of us — he and I — at deepest odds with our innermost selves. For I have yearned all my life long for repose, spiritual repose. Had I achieved it, I dare say, I'd have made a bigger man of myself.

CLARA. You ought to be content.

ORMIN. Content? Are you thinking of what the world calls my career? People look up to me as a physician,

as a professor, even — as if all that mattered the least bit! Under more favorable circumstances than I have been heir to, I might have accomplished greater things.

CLARA. Under more favorable —?

ORMIN. Well, suppose we put it this way: In the peaceful atmosphere of a veritable home. Please don't think me mawkish. I have always craved for that sort of thing, but somehow it was appointed far otherwise.

CLARA. Ah, but I can read a purpose in the fact that it was appointed otherwise.

ORMIN. A purpose? I doubt it, Clara. I doubt it because I know exactly where, under more auspicious circumstances, I might have found the repose I sought in vain. *[In a more ardent, but a quite simple tone of voice.]* We both know only too well, Clara, you and I.

CLARA *[gently shaking her head].* What a mad notion of yours!

ORMIN. Before saying good-bye, I thought I might be permitted to call it to mind.

CLARA. But not to utter it.

ORMIN *[earnestly but not heavily].* When you feel as I do, that you have never uttered the right words, and that the occasion will not present itself soon again —

CLARA *[smiling, but averting her gaze],* I hope, Ormin, you entertain no sinister presentiments.

ORMIN. Presentiments? Up to the present I've not gone far afield when I weighed probabilities strictly in the balance.

CLARA. But I have no presentiments whatever. And I feel, in fact I know — nothing will happen to you.

ORMIN. I'm not afraid. Bear in mind: nobody forced me to plunge headlong into the war and plague regions. The sealed purposes of Providence, however, are made more apparent to a man of my stripe from year to year.

CLARA. You are still young.

ORMIN. I? Ah, but you can say that more truthfully of Carl than of me.

CLARA. Of course you can say it of Carl too.

ORMIN. He has preserved himself better than I. His face is just as youthful as when he was an undergraduate. All around, he's had better luck than I.

CLARA *[smiling].* In spite of his philandering instinct?

ORMIN *[continuing earnestly].* I daresay in his profession too.

CLARA. Surely you don't envy him that, do you?

ORMIN. Why not? Is my calling on a higher plane? Sometimes an uncanny feeling seizes me when I am called to an unknown family and introduced — not to a human being, but to an ailing stomach. Eckold at least gets to know his patients.

CLARA. Nothing enviable in that —

ORMIN *[interrupting].* Yes, Clara, the lot of a consulting physician has quite a peculiar charm. Especially when, as in Carl's case, you enjoy a good measure of the normal milk of human kindness.

CLARA. Do you consider Carl a kind man?

ORMIN. H'm! That's a posing question. Kind? Of course, he is kind. Every one of us is that, more or less. But kindly —? I don't know whether you follow me. True kindness or goodness is a rare and noble quality. I think one may even commit crimes in goodness, one may even sin —

CLARA. Good people would never think of doing that.

ORMIN. You are quite right. Good people, at their best, never transcend petty meannesses.

CLARA *[laughing].* That — why, that might have been said by Floding.

ORMIN. You think so? Then, if you don't mind, I prefer to take it back.

CLARA *[somewhat taken aback].* Our old friend, it appears, has not succeeded in winning your goodwill.

ORMIN. Last summer we were thrown together every single day. And in vacations people betray themselves more than ordinarily.

CLARA. Perhaps it was just a game of his to appear other than he is. It's like Floding. If you saw him in his true likeness, then he must have altered a good deal.

ORMIN. A man doesn't alter, Clara. He may disguise himself, he may dazzle others at times himself. But in the deepest recesses of his soul *he* is unalterably the same.

CLARA. If one only knew where the deepest recesses of the soul are situated.

ORMIN. There you have it. Exactly. That's why we are always the same. But I might hazard a guess, they are probably situated where our subconscious wishes slumber or give the appearance of slumbering.

CLARA. In the last analysis, Ormin, nothing matters — nothing but the deed we have accomplished; that which we have undergone in life, not that which we have desired or yearned for.

ORMIN. Quite so, Clara. And we can know mighty little about a person as long as his real features are screened behind the mist of his so-called daily affairs.

CLARA *[smiling].* And you would have me believe that your gaze pierces this mist?

ORMIN *[earnestly].* Sometimes. And by virtue of this penetration, for instance, the adventitious circumstance that you happen to go through life in the guise of the wife of my old chum, Carl Eckold, hasn't

blinded me to the truth, namely, deep, deep within, Clara, you possess the soul of one who dares all for love.

CLARA *[growing pale].* One who dares all for love! *[Smiling.]* You flatter me exceedingly. I love Carl, quite naturally. I have always loved him. But beyond that there's nothing extraordinary about it.

ORMIN *[earnestly].* You know very well that's not what I was driving at.

CLARA *[with equal seriousness].* I have never coveted any other lot. Never. I think I may be permitted to say of myself, with justice, that I have adorned, as far as lay in my power, the busy and preoccupied life of one who was dearer to me than anything else in the world. It wasn't at all times an easy task. But, thank Heaven, I recognized it as my mission.

ORMIN. Yes. I can well believe that. For Carl had need of you.

CLARA. As I had need of him.

ORMIN. Is this true, Clara? Were you always convinced that Carl Eckold, and no one else, constituted the meaning and end of your life?

CLARA *[tartly].* He and Bettina. Yes, if you wish to put it that way; the meaning and the end.

ORMIN. I beg pardon, then.

CLARA. Quite unnecessary, I assure you.

ORMIN. Today, you see, I don't care to play cocksure. I can't say: — Well, until tomorrow or after tomorrow, dear lady.

CLARA *[laughing].* Why not six months hence, then?

ORMIN *[as gently as possible].* Let us hope so. *[He starts to go, but hesitates at a movement of hers.]* Oh, please don't break in on Carl. We've said good-bye already. And, with all due respect for him, the latest impression I wish to leave with you — *[interrupts himself. Simply.]* Good-bye, Clara.

CLARA. Good-bye. *[They meet at the door. He clasps her hand.]*

CLARA. Ormin!

ORMIN. Clara!

CLARA. You wear an air of having omitted something — through oversight.

ORMIN *[waveringly].* Omitted? Who has not?

CLARA. In this connection, Ormin, let me allay your apprehensions before you go, at least as regards myself — I pledge my word, dear friend, you have no cause to revile yourself for anything.

ORMIN. I can't quite make out —

CLARA. Assuming that way back — ten years ago, is it not? — you had proved more tumultuous or more skillful in your manoeuvring, well, you'd never have corralled me into your collection.

ORMIN. H'm. Really, I don't see why you try by this meticulous choice of words —

CLARA. Oh, I don't doubt, I'd have turned out a rare specimen. No. But it could never have been. Quite otherwise was it decreed. I don't mind telling you: I loved you.

ORMIN *[after a brief pause].* Oh! Oh! What a wretched simpleton I was!

CLARA *[laughing low].* You do yourself rank injustice. It didn't depend on you altogether. Had I loved you less than I did, I'd have flung myself into your arms — perhaps. But you were more to me than a mere lover. You had suddenly taken the shape of my destiny. For this reason it could never have come to pass. And you were not only my destiny —

ORMIN. What did it matter? I tell you, happiness would have been ours, Clara. How many people can say that? Happiness! Yours and mine.

CLARA. For six months going, maybe a year. And even in that brief time it would not have been vouchsafed to us unmixed.

ORMIN. We might have purified it. Drained off the dross, sooner or later.

CLARA. Never.

ORMIN. Bettina?

CLARA. Not for Bettina's sake alone.

ORMIN. For him? What was he to you — then?

CLARA. What was he to me? What he has always been. What he has remained to this day — to this very day. I didn't realize so clearly as at that moment that my proper place was here — that I belonged utterly to him. Never till that moment, Ormin.

ORMIN. Why just that moment?

CLARA. Never before was I so sure of myself. *[Pause.]*

ORMIN. Forgive me, but, if my memory doesn't deceive me, your relations with Carl, at that time, left much to be desired. *[Clara gazes at him astonished.]* — Oh, a blind man would have noticed that. There's no more transparent stuff than that which matrimony is made of. At a pinch the individual can disguise himself, but in the sphere of human relationships masquerade is impossible.

CLARA *[after a brief hesitation].* We were estranged at the time, if that's what you're aiming at. I won't attempt to dissemble. But despite that, indeed, for that very reason — *[interrupting herself, then more ardently.]* You will never understand! You've never conceived what marriage means — what marriage under certain circumstances may grow to mean. You've no idea of a year-in, year-out pull together — and ours was

a long pull together! What links are wrought, stronger than anything else which passion can forge between one man and one woman! Notwithstanding all the tugging and gnawing, the link holds firm. The couple belong to one another beyond recall. And one feels this all the more keenly —

ORMIN. When one chafes burningly to part.

CLARA. Do you appreciate the truth of your words? In the midst of black distrust and pangs, the two people belong to one another just the same — and later on, more irrevocably, more inescapably by reason of their mutual devotion and tenderness. I hadn't the courage to leave him. Then less than ever. Do you follow me now? *[with a soft smile].* All your overtures, as you see, would have fallen short. And so, when all's said, you've no grounds to reproach yourself.

ORMIN. Whether I follow you or not — what's the odds today? But that you should tell it to me now —

CLARA *[without looking at him].* I had to, Ormin, sooner or later.

ORMIN *[very softly].* You seem to be in doubt whether we shall meet again — here or elsewhere.

CLARA *[tumultuously].* Please don't carry away a spurious image of me —

ORMIN. Into eternity.

CLARA. Into the far-away.

ORMIN. It makes you happy thinking I shall carry into the far-away the image of a saint, rather than that of a woman —

CLARA. I don't pretend to be a saint. That description fits me much less than the other.

ORMIN. Let's not attach too much weight to mere words.

CLARA. For my part you may attach to them whatever weight you like. I come equally short of sainthood as I do of the passion of the woman who dares all for love. Believe me, I am a mere woman, like hundreds and thousands of other women. Perhaps no worse, but certainly no better.

ORMIN. That sounds as if — *[approaching her.]* Is there yet another secret, Clara?

CLARA. None whatever for you, Ormin, in this hour.

ORMIN. None —?

CLARA. None.

ORMIN. Do I follow you rightly, Clara?

CLARA. Certainly.

ORMIN. Still it's a secret — *[pause.]*

CLARA. A name —? Does that signify?

ORMIN. I am not inquisitive.

CLARA. Life is full of strange coincidences, Ormin. Tomorrow at this hour you will be strolling up and down the deck of the *Amphitrite* in his company —

ORMIN. In his —? What's that you say? In his — why, it's —

CLARA. Yes.

ORMIN. If that is so, then there was no chance of its ever turning into destiny for you.

CLARA. Why do you ask? *[Glancing meaningly about the room.]* Here is your answer.

ORMIN. I mean a chance that you could not possibly foresee.

CLARA. Perhaps there was none.

ORMIN. You will never convince me, Clara, that you plunged cold-bloodedly into an affair of this ilk. There must be some reason why it was just he —

CLARA. Hurt vanity! It's just like a man to seek an explanation of a commonplace affair of this sort, if he happens not to have been the, —

ORMIN. Lucky fellow.

CLARA. The lucky fellow?

ORMIN. You must have loved him?

CLARA. I don't mean to deny it.

ORMIN. More than you loved me?

CLARA *[laughing involuntarily]*. Less than you.

ORMIN. And yet, will you say, that he never could have been your destiny? He too might have been that. It would have been beyond your strength to resist if he had clung to you, if he had not released you, if he had claimed what was his due —

CLARA. Due? He claimed no more than I was ready to grant him. Life had not pampered him like some of the others.

ORMIN *[softly, to himself]*. Like some of the others.

CLARA. He was always lonesome — from childhood. He never knew the quiet of a father's house.

ORMIN. And, that being the case, you could pose as something of a sister and mother —

CLARA. We were lovers.

ORMIN *[still simply].* And you were the first heavenly ray to penetrate a lugubrious existence.

CLARA. I was.

ORMIN. Well, I must say, you had good reason to nourish the delusion.

CLARA. That's what I was to him. Perhaps I was more than mere happiness in his life. I don't know the kind of man life has made of him today. It cannot have offered him all that he hoped for, all that-perhaps he sought. But I know the man he was then. You, Ormin, did not know him. No. In fact, nobody knew him. Who troubled to peer into that cynical and solitary soul? I alone did. That is why I, of all people, can mean anything to him. And at the time I was the whole world to him — and without jeopardizing the calm of a third person concerned.

ORMIN. After all, it was an escapade.

CLARA. Escapade?

ORMIN. An affair. Fortunately, it came at a time when you were ripe for it.

CLARA *[shaking her head].* I foresaw it. *[Ormin gazes quizzically into her face.]* You make out my real features behind the mist. You discern them all. Everything is as you have said. Behind the mist of sensations and impressions is limned the true image of what I am in my deepest self. *[After a light sob.]* I shouldn't have told you, Ormin.

ORMIN. Do you regret, Clara? I am grateful to you. It is so beautiful, so splendid that you — that both of us in this hour should have been able to speak out at last.

CLARA. Are we quite sure —?

ORMIN. Clara!

CLARA. Well, perhaps you are right. If it were only a question of words!

ORMIN. We will forget the words. Nothing depends on them. They are only —

[Eckold comes in from the right.]

ECKOLD. Eh, still here? Good!

CLARA. I was just about to call you.

ORMIN *[ready to leave].* Dear chap —

ECKOLD. Thanks awfully for waiting.

ORMIN. I must say goodbye now.

ECKOLD. NO use keeping you any longer. Once more, bon voyage ——

[They shake hands.] Don't you know, Ormin — no sense in hiding it from you at this stage — I sort of envy you.

ORMIN. You do? Well, why not come along? Give up your practice for a few months and join us.

ECKOLD. What would I do? Surgery's not in my line.

ORMIN. That makes no bones. I guess we can handle the epidemic well enough. No red herring there for you, is there? —

ECKOLD. Going's out of the question, even if it tempted me. I'm the sort of person who never gets beyond the wishing stage.

ORMIN *[to Clara].* Isn't he a little unjust to himself? —

CLARA. That's what I keep telling him sometimes.

ECKOLD. Well *[pause]* — good luck. Cure them by the thousands. And, mind you, come back whole yourself.

ORMIN. I hope for the best. Well, adieu. Think of me sometimes. Auf Wiedersehen, Clara. *[He extends his hand and goes.] Silence.] [Eckold glances at the clock and rings. Servingman enters.]*

ECKOLD. Has anyone else come in since?

SERVINGMAN. No, sir.

ECKOLD. Cab gone off yet?

SERVINGMAN *[going to window]*. Not yet, sir. *[Exit.]*

CLARA. It's only half-past five. *[She goes to the window. Eckold seats himself and takes the newspaper.]*

CLARA *[turning toward him].* You had something to say to me.

ECKOLD. It will wait till tomorrow.

CLARA. About Bettina, isn't it? Family inheritance? Any difficulties? You were to the notary's today.

ECKOLD. Yes. The affair of the inheritance is going very smoothly. In a week or two everything will be adjusted. In any case, Bettina won't stick at a trifle. But — I wanted to ask you; you long for her very much, don't you?

CLARA. And you?

ECKOLD. Goes without saying. But I — I have my profession. You, I daresay, will find it harder getting used to her being away.

CLARA. I was prepared for it.

ECKOLD. Even so. Your whole life, at least during the past year, was wrapped up in Bettina. And you will feel an empty gap now.

CLARA *[forcing a smile].* Oh, but there are heaps of things to distract one.

ECKOLD *[staring straight ahead].* At all events. If you care to go over to Berlin — don't trouble about me. Go. *[Clara gazes at him astonished.]*

ECKOLD. I won't object at all. Less so, considering that Bettina is no longer with us, and there is no further need of our living together now.

CLARA. You amaze me.

ECKOLD. What amazes you?

CLARA *[portraying growing astonishment].* You want to — you mean I should go away to Berlin?

ECKOLD. Merely a suggestion. Of course, we will have to canvass the details. But all things considered, I believe —

CLARA. What can this mean? What sudden idea is this?

ECKOLD. Sudden? It only looks that way to you. Until now I didn't mention it. The time wasn't ripe for it. I like to talk about things only when they have become, in a measure, realizable. But let me assure you it's an old notion of mine that after Bettina's marriage it might be a good thing to give up living together.

CLARA. Living to —

ECKOLD. Yes. Quite an old notion — a cherished notion, I might say. Let me see; I can tell you exactly how old it is — even to the very day it first struck me. It's ten years now. Last May it was ten years to a day. Do you follow me?

[He stands directly opposite her. They eye each other closely. Pause.]

CLARA. You mean that for ten whole years you kept silent?

ECKOLD. Yes. For ten whole years. But I'm not making a bid for your admiration. One must only be certain about what one wants. And I was certain. To trouble the outward calm of our existence, to bring about a deep-rooted revulsion of our life-relationship, while our daughter was still living under the roof of her parents would have been highly impractical, not to say immoral. And it would be just as immoral if we continued living together in our old way now that Bettina's gone.

CLARA. You kept silent ten whole years?

ECKOLD. I knew to-day had to come. Indeed, I lived in anticipation of it.

CLARA. Ten years you have waited for today? I can't bring myself to believe it. I credit no man with such

self-control, least of all you, Carl.

ECKOLD. You have always underrated me. That I know. Both of you have underrated me. *[Pause.]*

CLARA. Why didn't you send me away then?

ECKOLD. With equal right I might ask: Why didn't you go away of your own accord?

CLARA. I can answer that very easily. Because I held this to be my home. Because this was my home, no matter what had happened.

ECKOLD. That view has its advantages, no doubt, especially its extraordinary convenience.

CLARA. It was your view too.

ECKOLD. Oh —

CLARA. Yes, it was. Otherwise what's to have prevented your showing me the door? It would have been only right, considering the opinion you held of me. What prevented you at the time, I haven't the slightest doubt, was the feeling that at bottom our relations were still the same.

ECKOLD. Ah!

CLARA. NO act of mine could have wrought a complete change.

ECKOLD. I don't quite grasp your —

CLARA. We were too far apart, as it was. That was the point. And what happened then had very little to do with our estrangement. ECKOLD. Estrangement? To what period do you allude? What do you call estrangement?

CLARA. Slipped your memory, has it? That which made everything else sufferable?

ECKOLD. Ah, yes, I know what you mean. You refer to the most dismal period of my life, when I was burdened down with cares and struggles; when I had finally to relinquish my academic and scientific dreams. I was doomed then — not because I lacked the necessary qualifications — I was doomed to remain a hack in my calling, instead of achieving what came as a windfall to others. I grant you, I was very ill-tempered. But I can picture the type of woman who would, at such a pass, have stood stoutly by the side of the man and cheered him and compensated him for all the meannesses he had to encounter in the world of daily affairs. You, however, attempted to make of my melancholy a kind of fault. And this estrangement — convenient word — was nothing more than a welcome refuge whereby you could seek your happiness elsewhere.

CLARA. You're not fair to me, Carl. I tried my very best at the time to lift you above your disillusions and trying experiences. But I wasn't strong enough for the task. Perhaps I tired too quickly. But it never for a moment occurred to me to blame you for your unfortunate temperament, as you charge. That this estrangement came about, was nobody's fault, yours no more than mine. It may be that human relations are subject to the same ailments as human beings. Surely you feel the truth of this. And so, all along you must have known that the obvious fact itself — the betrayal, as it used to be called, has very little significance

outside of this. Otherwise, you would not have put up with it as you did.

ECKOLD. You think so? I see that I owe you an explanation as to how I could and did put up with it. To begin with, I was forewarned. I had the good sense to perceive destiny draw near. One can always do that. Some people shut their eyes tightly when it approaches. I refused to do so. And in this way I was clever enough to anticipate you. Do you follow me? Fling my vanity the dole. I didn't wait until the minute when your destiny and mine were consummated. I beheld it approaching. It was inevitable. And thus I prepared for it. It's surprising that you did not once suspect me. How little you must have cared for me! And I made no secret of it at all. Why he, your lover, knew all about it. Didn't he tell you? Odd! Perhaps it's slipped your memory. Well, it makes no difference. Destiny was fairly merciful, especially since I had all my plans worked out for the future.

CLARA *[in a quiet voice].* It would have been more delicate to have shown me the door.

ECKOLD. And more delicate of you to have gone away at the right time. Such matters are never very delicate. It wouldn't have been practical to have parted then.

CLARA. Surely you don't believe that?

ECKOLD. Why not? Would my decision appear more conscionable, do you think, if I rolled my eyes, lifted my hand to strike you and stormed about like a madman? I might have done it ten years ago, had I been a fool. You can't expect it today.

CLARA. There's no one here to witness the scene, Carl — no one. You will please consider me as little importunate as I consider you a —

ECKOLD. A what?

CLARA. A comedian who simply won't have his big scene ruined. Well, let this suffice. You wanted your triumph. You have it. And let it content you. As you may imagine I shall try to be with Bettina as often as possible. That's my own wish. But of what use is all the rest? Why sever our relationship today? Why? Since we know that nothing of the sort is apt to happen again, there's nothing I can see which would justify such a belated punishment and revenge. We can still go on being what we have been to one another in these latter years. Throughout all these years, thank heaven, you haven't always played comedy parts. It's beyond human endurance. You would have forgiven me, at heart, long ago, even if you did not forgive yourself. Oh, before, a long time before we came to be nothing but good friends —

ECKOLD. Good friends? Mere words! Naturally there's this thing and that to talk about when one is living together under the same roof, especially because of the many common interests. Above all, when there is a child. If you care to call such a bond friendship, I'm sure I have no objection. For my own part, however, I always held my life to be apart from yours, and I have lived in anticipation of this hour.

CLARA. But only since we became nothing more than house companions. Once it was different.

ECKOLD. It was never different.

CLARA. It was different! Recollect. After the dark hour of estrangement, of lies, if you will, there came

another, a better time when we found each other again.

ECKOLD. We? Found one another —?

CLARA. We both realized what we had suffered without unlocking our lips. And many wounds were healed. Everything, in fact. Yes. Try to recall. We were happy again as in the past, happier than we had ever been. You could never glean that from your intercourse with the world. Call to mind our wonderful trip — soon after. And the glorious days in Rome, in Naples. You threw off your comedy part. Let everything else crumble. But when we were again reconciled after our — respective affairs and we had learned anew what we meant to each other — that was no lie, no self-deception! Only make an effort to recall. It's a little hard to speak of it today. But you know and I know that at no time was I so utterly yours. Never, even in our earliest years of married life, was I so completely your ideal as then when we found each other again.

ECKOLD. Nonsense!

CLARA. It can't be —

ECKOLD. It is. You were neither my wife, nor my ideal — much less than later, for instance, you were my friend. You couldn't be that to me again.

CLARA. Carl!

ECKOLD. Yes, I recall. It possesses its own peculiar allurement, the time you speak of. But you were not my ideal. At the very best —

CLARA *[passionately].* Don't say what's utterly beyond cure!

ECKOLD. Why should there be a cure? You will always be the same to me.

CLARA. Carl! If this be true —

ECKOLD. It is true!

CLARA. You should have told me this before you took me back. You had the right, it may be, to drive me away, even to kill me, if you wished. But the right to conceal the punishment you had meted out to me was not yours — You have deceived me more nefariously and a thousandfold more cowardly than I have deceived you. You have demeaned me lower than one human being has a right to demean another human being!

ECKOLD *[triumphing].* Do you feel that? Does it cut you to the heart? Ah, that's as it should be. It was worth waiting ten years for this hour, this hour when you feel your degradation as trenchantly as I felt mine then.

CLARA. I never degraded you.

ECKOLD. Yes, you did. You degraded me, made me look ridiculous and heaped insult upon insult. Were it not he, I might perhaps have forgotten — forgiven. My anger would have dissolved into thin air, my hate would have vanished. But you gave yourself to him of all people — to him who has inherited all things from childhood —— everything which was denied me. I was filled with doubts and qualms. But it was he who

always gave himself airs, held himself a better man because, forsooth, nature had endowed him with a gayer temperament. That galled my heart. But it also lent me patience to allow my hate to swell.

CLARA. He? What piece of good fortune did he come into? Who on earth is so fortunate that you should speak such words of envy?

ECKOLD. Do you hide his precious name still —— Ormin's name? The lordly Ormin's, the superior Ormin's, the favorite of the gods —

CLARA *[stupefied].* Ormin? But that — Ormin? Suppose it's all a mistake?

ECKOLD. Eh? What sudden notion of yours is this?

CLARA. Produce your evidence, if you have any. Produce it.

ECKOLD. The trick comes too late. Ten times — a hundred times you betrayed yourself. But how could you fancy that all suspicions were disarmed, and all foresight provided, simply because he engaged lodgings for your dove-cote under an assumed name? Naturally, the investigations were made a trifle difficult through the genial pseudonym of Ernst Mayer, but they led eventually to the goal, even though it was just in the nick of time. Had you broken with him on the tenth of May instead of on the next day, then I should have had practically no evidence against you. For on the next day, a little nervous perhaps about your security, Mr. Ernst Mayer decided to go away on a journey — it is not recorded where — and your love's young dream came to an end. I am quite well posted, am I not? And how beautifully everything adjusted itself for us. Had I also seen you disappear on the next day from that house —

CLARA. Well?

ECKOLD. Oh, I don't know. Maybe your dove-cote episode would have ended tragically. For a trace of folly will be found in every one of us — in the Ormins as well as the Eckolds of the world. As it was, however, I had time to think it over. I did think it over and came to the conclusion that I would keep silent until today.

CLARA. And in his presence today —

ECKOLD. Why should I trouble about him? Sentimental ninny! Who in his old age, realizing that his gifts are growing stale, crosses the sea, seeking in the romantic atmosphere of pestilence and war, a reconciliation with his worthy wife —

CLARA. Why do you abuse him?

ECKOLD. Why not? Wasn't his whole life a public abuse of me?

CLARA. If you felt that way about it why didn't you say so to his face today?

ECKOLD. Men need not talk earnestly and in detail about such things. What women mean to me, what women have meant to me from a certain moment in my life, others as well as you, I've never hidden from him. In the same way he has always known that I have penetrated to the innermost recesses of his rather delicate and complacent soul.

CLARA. There is nothing to see in him. He never played comedy parts as you have. He was always truthful.

ECKOLD. Is the old witchery still effective, do you think? Positively you are beginning to pity me.

CLARA. I don't need to. I've been happy in my time, as happy as any woman can hope to be. I am still happy today — in the consciousness that I once belonged to him. Nothing can rob me of that memory. It was he and no one else. And I loved him beyond words. Beyond words — do you follow me? As I have loved nobody else in the world. Oh, I shall never forget that I was happy in this house and that I was intimate for so many years with no one as with you. And you, too, later, when you are calmer, will call to mind those happy hours. But what were the gifts life offered, what was domestic happiness, maternal bliss, compared to the lease of blessed ecstasy when I was — his — his — when I was his all-in-all —

ECKOLD. You saw him today for the last time. Do you realize that? You understand now why I forewent the opportunity of explanation with him.

CLARA. I understand. Oh, I understand everything so lucidly that I am going to leave this house — tonight.

ECKOLD. We are of one mind. But why leave just today? I give you leave to stay as long as you like.

CLARA. As it is, it is ten years too late.

ECKOLD *[shrugging his shoulders].* You know my view. Really I'm not unthankful toward those first years of our marriage, but today — but today the time had come to speak about those other matters. Cruel words in cases like this are unavoidable. *[Glances out of the window.]* I haven't given up hope altogether that later, perhaps, we will talk quietly. Have you nothing else to say to me? Well, then, this — this evening let it be. There are, of course, certain necessary formal matters to be discussed. I have to go now — I must *[hesitates, then]* — Adieu. *[Clara remains silent. Eckold goes out. Clara stands alone for a space, rigid and immobile; then, as if awaking from a trance, she darts into the room on the left, and returns almost immediately with her hat and wraps. She hesitates. Then seating herself at the small secretary, she takes a blank sheet of paper and starts to write. Almost inaudibly.]*

CLARA. What's the good? Words lie. *[Rising.]* Bettina? She needs me no longer. *[Rings.]*

MAID *[who has entered].* Did you ring, madam?

CLARA. I shall be home rather late tonight. Don't wait with the supper. *[Goes out. The maid gazes at her somewhat perplexed.]*

[CURTAIN.]

PART II. THE BIG SCENE

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

PERSONS



CONRAD HERBOT, *AN actor.*

SOPHIE, *his wife.*

EDGAR GLEY.

DOCTOR FALK, *director of a theatre.*

VILMA FLAMM.

A BELL-HOP.

A THEATRE EMPLOYEE.

THE BIG SCENE



[SCENE. *AN APARTMENT in a fashionable hotel. There is a door framed in the back wall giving onto the corridor; another, hung with portieres, on the left, conducting to an adjoining room. Down left, a fireplace with brightly burning logs. Directly in front of the fireplace, a small table with a settee. In the centre, a thought to the right, an ordinary escritoire with telephone apparatus*

Alongside the escritoire, as if tentatively pushed up, is a divan. In the back, left, alcoves skillfully concealed by curtains. There is a rather large window on the right affording a glimpse of the theatre vis-à-vis. Two wardrobes flank either side of the door in the back.
Late afternoon on a day toward the end of fall. For several minutes the room remains vacant. Then, a knock. Pause. The knocking is resumed.

A Bell-hop glides in by way of the door in the back. He is carrying several letters. Almost simultaneously Sophie enters from the other door.]

SOPHIE. Letters? *[The Bell-hop intent on putting the letters on the escritoire approaches her.]* Any for me? — *[She relieves him of the letters and glances hastily through the pile. She puts three on the escritoire and keeps one in her hand.]* Ah! From him. *[The Bell-hop goes. Sophie moves to the window with the letter, which she proceeds feverishly to open. She reads it, smiles as if pleased, shakes her head and then resumes reading. In the midst of this, she is interrupted by another knock.]* Come in.

[The Bell-hop re-enters, this time with a card which he hands to Sophie.]

SOPHIE. Vilma Flamm? I don't recollect ever meeting her.

BELL-HOP. The lady says she comes by previous appointment.

SOPHIE. By previous appointment? Ah, quite so. You will please inform the lady that my husband — that Mr. Herbot, actor by appointment to the Burgtheatre, is not at home. *[The Bellhop goes.]*

SOPHIE *[continues reading her letter. Her face shows that she is profoundly touched].* No. What an idea! Surely he doesn't believe — *[a knock].* I wonder what that is now? Come in.

[Vilma Flamm enters. She is a girl somewhere in the vicinity of twenty-two, fashionably but not, one would say, expensively gowned. Nor, taken all in all, is she particularly attractive, due perhaps to the fact that her hat is so immense and her coif so distinctly and unmistakably of Pre-Raphaelite origin. Her eyes are lustrous and dark. She is slightly ill at ease under Sophie's appraising look.]

VILMA. I beg your pardon —

SOPHIE. Miss Flamm, I believe —?

VILMA. Yes. I come at the request of — SOPHIE. Didn't the boy tell you? Mr. Herbot is not at home just

now.

VILMA. I hope you will forgive me, but I couldn't help thinking there must be some mistake since Mr. Herbot asked me here at five today. I'm afraid I am a trifle late. Do you expect Mr. Herbot back shortly?

SOPHIE *[extremely cool].* I can't say for certain. Don't you think you had better call again some other time? Or — would you prefer waiting in the lobby?

VILMA. I — wait? I'm not strong on the art of waiting. And besides — I presume you are Mr. Herbot's secretary?

SOPHIE. No, I am his wife.

VILMA *[involuntarily].* Ah! —

SOPHIE. The announcement seems to occasion you a good deal of amazement, Miss Flamm. VILMA. Oh no. Only I was under the impression — to be sure, it's common gossip by now, that Mr. Herbot is divorced from his wife.

SOPHIE *[with admirable self-possession].* A mistake, I assure you.

VILMA. Thank Heaven for that.

SOPHIE *[wheeling half-way round].* Very good of you to say so, I'm sure. *[With greater affableness.]* If you'd care to leave a message for my husband —?

VILMA. I do hope you won't mind! But, you see, it's rather of a personal nature. I came expecting to get a try-out from Mr. Herbot, who has made a great name for himself at the Burgtheatre.

SOPHIE. A try-out?

VILMA. Perhaps I ought to tell you that I am preparing myself for a career on the stage. For six months, or thereabouts, I've been a pupil of Madame Fuchs. But lately I have gotten into the habit of questioning very seriously whether her method is quite the correct one. It goes without saying, that the members of my family are utterly opposed to the idea. My father's a merchant in the city — Flamm and Sons, Haberdashers. The sons are my brothers. I gave Mr. Herbot full particulars about myself in a letter which I sent him a little over a week ago. And in reply Mr. Herbot was generous enough to call this appointment for five o'clock today. I suppose he's forgotten all about it.

SOPHIE. Quite possible, since, as you say, he made it eight days ago — *[A knock.]*

VILMA *[eagerly].* Come in. Oh — I beg — your pardon.

[Sophie smiles involuntarily. The Bell-hop appears with a card.]

SOPHIE. Oh, certainly. Show him in.

[*Falk enters. He is a small slender man, clean-shaven, with a pair of keen penetrating eyes. He wears a*

tortoise-shell pince-nez which he removes instinctively from time to time from the bridge of his nose. He is wearing an overcoat. In one hand he clutches a stick and in the other a manuscript case.]

FALK. Well, here I am. I didn't wait to be shown in.

SOPHIE *[quite beside herself with joy. Offering him her hand].* Good evening, dear friend. *[To Vilma, who remains standing gazing wide-eyed at the director.]* You will pardon me, Miss Flamm, but, if I were you, I would write again.

VILMA. Would it be too presumptuous to beg you to present me to the director —

[Falk turns away after shooting a withering glance at Vilma.]

SOPHIE *[slightly confused].* For the moment — I — have forgotten your name ——

VILMA. If you will allow me, I will introduce myself: I am Vilma Flamm, actress by profession —— an actress, that is, about to be. Herr Director you see before you one of your most ardent admirers. I rarely visit any other theatre but yours. So I would take this opportunity —

FALK. But I would not. *[Turns away.]*

VILMA. It was wholly unintentional, I assure you. It must have been the hand of destiny —

FALK. Perhaps. If so, then you have entirely misread the drift of this hand. I do not discuss theatrical business outside of my office, and there only between two and three, afternoons, by previous arrangement.

VILMA. Then may I call on you tomorrow at two —?

FALK. Please don't put yourself out, my dear young lady. We have no vacancy at the present moment. But you are young yet; my advice to you is to try the provinces. Germany, believe me, is rich in excellent —

VILMA *[as if suddenly struck with the idea].* Theatres.

FALK. Railways. Good evening, Miss —

VILMA. At all events, I shall never forget this hour.

FALK. I can't put a stop to your memory, I'm sure.

VILMA. Good evening, Mrs. Herbot. Good evening, Herr Director.

[She goes out.]

FALK *[still flourishing his stick].* Why do you let people of that description cross your threshold, Mrs. Herbot. May I —?

[He places his stick and overcoat on the divan, but retains the case in his hand.]

SOPHIE. I couldn't help it. She came in unawares. Herbot, it seems, had made an appointment with her in

order, as she says, to give her a try-out.

FALK. One shouldn't object to that. Occasionally he is obsessed with the idea of instructing the young.

SOPHIE. There are times when — I — I feel as if I must pack my things and leave him.

FALK. It wouldn't pay, that. As regards this would-be actress, she needn't trouble you nor me nor even him very much. Proof is, he wasn't even at home when she called.

SOPHIE. He wrote her eight days ago when, supposedly, he was divorced.

FALK. Oh no.

SOPHIE. And if I hadn't come yesterday —

FALK *[seizing the occasion]*. But you are here, my dear Sophie. Let's keep to that just now. And that's why I've come: to offer you my welcome and congratulations on your return.

SOPHIE. Thanks. I gladly accept your welcome. But as to the congratulations — do you think they are à propos?

FALK. Indeed they are. A thousand congratulations. I've already congratulated your husband at rehearsal today, and I daresay I have every reason in the world to congratulate myself, besides, on winning back my star actor. —

SOPHIE. But you never lost him, to begin with.

FALK. Still —

SOPHIE. Oh, I followed his repertory day by day. He played, in all, from September 1st until today, October 30th. Six times a week, and in the course of this period he created two brand-new parts, one classic and the other modern. And both, I understand, were successes.

FALK. Successes? H'm. That's as you look at it. To my way of thinking, he made a fizzle of these parts. Why, I couldn't help hissing him myself — under my breath, of course, because noisy manifestations of disapproval are prohibited in my theatre. Oh yes; he made a hit with the gallery. What else do you expect? Good Heavens, a dozen geniuses can be ruined and laid away before the great general public or, for that matter, the critics get even an inkling that one of the most cherished idols of the day is threatening to topple. Only the other day, — it was in Tasso — he tripped up disgracefully on lines no fewer than seven times. The gullible, easily credulous public, I daresay, thought each slip-up a fresh nuance. In addition he's fallen into a habit of mouthing — the same mannerism, in fact, which he used to pull off before I came along and literally rescued him from the Burgtheatre.

SOPHIE. Don't try to cry down the Burgtheatre. It's superior to — most others.

FALK. Oh, of course. That's a regular little pet view which you Viennese hold. Let me tell you, dear Sophie, it would have spelled the end of Herbot as an actor if he —

SOPHIE. If he had stayed on at the Burgtheatre?

FALK. Ah — no. I mean, if you two had not been brought together again. As a patron of German art in general and as a director of a theatre in particular, I was bound to bring you both to your senses.

SOPHIE. Oh!

FALK. And to thrust you into his arms.

SOPHIE. Indeed? Then it was the theatre director, not my husband, who sent me those appealing letters.

FALK. Appealing or not, at all events, I am gratified that they were not sent unavailingly. And I can't help coddling myself into thinking that not only my theatre, but Herbot himself and you, above all, are going to gain by it.

SOPHIE. Will you not admit — be truthful now! — that I acted a little precipitately in coming so soon.

FALK. I don't think so. But, touching those other things, I don't care to be pretentious. It is for the best; it is good for you too, that Herbot and you have made it up. You belong to one another. Yes, apart from whatever indiscretions you may have committed or may, in future, commit!

SOPHIE. You!

FALK. I mean, either of you. And as for him — well, this is by no means the first time that I've called your attention to it — you must really take him as he is. Wherever geniuses are to be considered, you can always count on a certain amount of poignant grief to directors as well as to women.

SOPHIE. Except that, in the case of the director, the grief has its recompense.

FALK. Don't say that, Sophie. Ultimately, it has its recompense for you women, too. You must exult exquisitely, you women, when you realize that a jack-a-napes fashioned along Herbot's lines, is directly dependent on you, and that this dependency increases from year to year. In short, if you will have the truth, he can neither live nor act without you. Don't you perceive, Sophie, if ever there existed an indisputable mark of love, then here it is. And since you cannot live without him —

SOPHIE. I'm not so sure of that.

FALK. Well, at all events, you are here. The rest will follow, if it hasn't already. But let me have a good look at you, Sophie. Seclusion, it seems, has worked wonders with you —— if seclusion it was.

SOPHIE. Doctor! Whatever can you be thinking of?

FALK. Well, assuming for an instant it were true, nobody would count it against you. Least of all, he. And revenge, if you'll forgive the bromide, is said to be sweet.

SOPHIE. Revenge is a thing I do not understand.

FALK. Oh, well, it doesn't matter much because revenge — at least in cases like this — rarely comes

unalloyed. For the doer of vengeance, so called, a good deal of the sweetness is thinned in the process, a fact which has somehow got itself overlooked in the proverb. Why are you laughing, Sophie?

SOPHIE. What you just said, is very clever. But how ruthlessly you'd cut it out, if by chance you came across it in the dialogue of one of your playwrights!

FALK. Well, what do you expect? Wisdom on the stage is like sowing the sands. It's altogether out of place. But to take up again our uncut dialogue: — Ah, but you have grown slenderer and a shade paler in complexion.

SOPHIE. You only fancy so, doctor. I'm looking fine. And, all in all, I had a splendid time. Seclusion isn't such a bad thing after all —— and bracing, quite bracing, believe me. Just think: to stroll for hours along the stretch of beach or to lose oneself in some beautiful book or to lie, perfectly relaxed, in a boat and gaze up, drinking in the blue immensity of the heavens; but, above and beyond all this, not to have to listen to lies, lies — the whole livelong day.

FALK. You exaggerate, Sophie. Lies —! There are no such things as lies in the world. There are only people who permit themselves to be fooled. And you were never one of them, Sophie. On the other hand, there are certain human relations that are founded on lies. Only this fact must be ignored, never traded on. In spite of everything, Herbot loves you and has always loved you. This is the undeniable truth, no matter what has happened.

SOPHIE. And will happen in the future, you must add.

FALK. It will never happen again. This would-be tragedy queen in her rather piteous dilemma is negligible, any way you take her. Surely Herbot couldn't foresee eight days ago that you'd give in. He probably wanted to lay in fuel for the winter.

SOPHIE. Do you condone this sort of thing too? Do you realize that he wrote me daily, though I haven't replied with so much as a couple of cool lines. And what letters!

FALK. More beautiful than mine?

SOPHIE. It seemed that he had no other thought, no other longing but for me.

FALK. Which is quite true. Shall I tell you, Sophie, how this spoiled child wept like a babe because of you. You won't take unfair advantage of the confidence, I hope. And not only did he come up and weep in my quiet chambers, but recently, the other day, in fact, we were sitting in the restaurant and he was to all intents and purposes gay; and then suddenly he dropped his head on the table and commenced whimpering like a dog.

SOPHIE. And in your apartment, you say, ne wept like a babe. Doubtless this is a fine distinction.

FALK. Well then, if you'll have it so, like a dog —

SOPHIE. But in the restaurant, I suppose, you first opened a "pottle Sec," as he calls it.

FALK. No use denying it.

SOPHIE. He did drink with you —

FALK. Only when despair got the better of him.

SOPHIE. But you'll admit that he got pleasure out of it.

FALK. Yes. Life runs its course. That's from one of my playwrights. Not very profound, I daresay, but it hits the bull's-eye. And so what can we do but resign ourselves to our destinies? Tonight, after the final curtain of *Hamlet* — 11.45 — in honor of the reunion of husband and wife, and of the cause of German art, we'll blow ourselves to a "pottle" of wine. And I promise you, he won't start whimpering tonight — But what the deuce can be keeping him so long?

SOPHIE. His usual afternoon stroll — or, who knows, he may be betraying me with some tragedienne or banker's wife — or simply a shopgirl.

FALK. Oh please! Betraying you —! Before Hamlet? Incredible!

SOPHIE *[laughing involuntarily]*. What's that you're promenading back and forth?

FALK. Oh this?' This is a new play. A very interesting part for him? I want him to look at it. Now that the affair *[with a bow]* has been successfully concluded, I know I can trust in his judgment.

SOPHIE. You flatter me.

FALK. But, tell me, when did you arrive, Frau Sophie, which being rendered into our beloved German tongue, means, not without good reason, Frau Wisdom.

SOPHIE. Last night. Oh, you needn't pull a wry face. The hotel was overcrowded. We got this room this morning.

FALK. Seriously now, doesn't it speak well for him that he has kept your charming apartment locked up and sworn an oath that he won't cross the threshold except arm in arm with you?

SOPHIE. Oh yes, there are some oaths which he keeps. You see, the hotel, being directly opposite the theatre, is altogether more convenient for — try-outs and coaching —

FALK. Enough. Either you're reconciled or you're not reconciled. Why are you suspicious? Have you any grounds? Quite frankly, I didn't come here with the single purpose of congratulating you. There is a promise I want to obtain from you, if I can.

SOPHIE. A promise?

FALK. That you won't go through the same rigmarole again.

SOPHIE. Rigmarole? I?

FALK. I mean, that you won't leave him again. I can't afford accidents in the middle of the season. This time

you fled on August 14th, and it wasn't until September 1st that he recovered sufficiently to act. Now wouldn't I be in a fine fix, if you were to do it again when the play we re producing happens to be a hit? I simply cant let matters reach that pass. And so I want you to promise me —

SOPHIE. Hadn't we better sign a contract.

FALK. Contract —? Oh please! I wish you to give your promise gratuitously, out of a sense of conviction, insight and understanding of my position. He, I know, won't trespass again. As a conductor of a place of amusement, you realize that I am committed, like the prohibition of smoking in the theatre, to anticipate every eventuality. And so if this little thing should happen again —

SOPHIE. Doctor! You amaze me. Little thing! Have I been speaking to the four winds? Or must I assume that in this lying world, even such a respectable member of society — such a gentleman as yourself, has lost, along with the rest, the power to differentiate between levity and — baseness?

FALK. But — but —

SOPHIE. Under such circumstances, how can I come back to him?

FALK. You needn't come back to him. To begin with, you should not go away at all. Why don't you take things less tragically? You can do it. You have proved it over and over again. To be truthful with you, I can't understand why you left this time —?

SOPHIE. You can't understand? You, who have been a bystander through it all, from beginning to end?

FALK. You remember three years ago? I was a bystander to that too. As far as I can tell, the cases are alike. Faithless once, faithless always. Why did you leave this time —?

SOPHIE. They are different, dear friend. At that time we two alone, Herbot and I, had to make it up with one another. The happiness of other people was not at stake.

FALK. Of course a third person was involved. That's in the very nature of these affairs.

SOPHIE. Philinchen? A frivolous woman who'd gone through almost everything, and who had no responsibility whatever to herself or to anybody else. And then, when a man plays the same dangerous rôle night after night for a hundred nights, and you are playing opposite him — it's like tempting fate. I saw it coming on the first night, huge, irresistible. After that the only question was at which performance the affair would come to full fruition.

FALK. It was on the ninth. By the twenty fifth it was closed.

SOPHIE. You keep your books accurately, doctor.

FALK. I am half a parent to Herbot. And I assure you, had it lasted longer, I should have substituted another Rautendelein. Entirely on your account, dear Sophie. Because I knew you did mind, in spite of what you say.

SOPHIE. Mind? Ah no. I understood it. I said to myself: — What would happen to you if you played opposite a man like Herbot, night after night? Unfortunately, there is no other like him. I can quite grasp how

like incense, like a wild abandon, a nightmare, the feeling would come over one — and then at last one awakes. This forbearance did not come at once. In the throes of my first anguish, I wanted to kill them.

FALK. Both?

SOPHIE *[earnestly]*. Him — at least, him.

FALK. And what about me? Eh? I should have had to put off my play. And a fine chance I'd have, getting on my feet again!

SOPHIE *[laughing involuntarily]*. But how do you explain the fact that, after Herbot, others played the part?

FALK. Later — much later. Before a performance, I warn you, no star is allowed to be murdered. Now you have an inkling of what drawbacks there are in this repertory business. But many thanks for not carrying out your intention. You were wise in thinking better of it, just as now —

SOPHIE. I'm not sure yet whether it's the best thing in this case, though.

FALK. Right after the affair — after that first crisis, I remember quite well that you really became mated for the first time. And you were wonderfully happy. At least until August of this year. And, trust me, you will be happy together again.

SOPHIE. Wonderfully happy?

FALK. Certainly.

SOPHIE. I don't think so. Even though I've come back, be assured it can never mean happiness again.

FALK. But —

SOPHIE. Only think, doctor, who the favorite is now. A young girl, an innocent young girl about to be married. And her fiancé is a splendid young man who is quite daft about the girl. Besides, he and Herbot are quite friendly. Has anyone the right to jeopardize a third person in an affair of this kind?

FALK. In a higher sense, certainly not. But in the present instance the happiness of a third person is not in peril. The fellow knows absolutely nothing, and the wedding will take place in eight days.

SOPHIE. Oh, that is the least consideration.

FALK. I'm afraid, Sophie, you've been to too many performances of Ibsen at my theatre. Luckily, Herbot has no use for Ibsen and regards the affair as comparatively harmless — not very different from that other one. At that time, it was the case of a young girl of good family too; yes, and she was about to be married. But an affair of this sort doesn't always imply a climax, as you think. With the perplexities of conscience Herbot has no patience. His is much too primitive — let us be frank — his is too wholesome a nature.

SOPHIE. Wholesome? Is that the correct word?—'

FALK. Really, I never dreamed you'd take the thing so painfully. At first I had no idea when the affair would

peter out. They were wrapped up in one another and noticed nothing or seemed to notice nothing. Naturally I wondered a bit, and I dare say I had cause to wonder too.

SOPHIE. That's a bit dark, doctor.

FALK. Well, what I mean is that I should certainly have wondered if they had let the thing go on that way, if at the critical moment I had not found them with entanglements elsewhere.

SOPHIE *[smiling].* Indeed. How you notice everything, dear doctor.

FALK. You don't have to be particularly sharp for that. And I, as an old skillful dramatist, cannot lay the tragic blame at your door.

SOPHIE *[very earnestly].* Perhaps you are right. But I am not altogether without blame. Otherwise I should not have come back.

FALK. And wouldn't it be much nicer — and here the unmoral casuist puts the question — wouldn't it somewhat relieve the situation if you were likewise — how shall I put it? — caught in a fault?

SOPHIE. Perhaps. Similar thoughts have come to me unaided in my seclusion.

FALK. Similar thoughts occurred to you, and yet you remained alone?

SOPHIE. Do you still doubt that?

FALK. Oh no!

SOPHIE. I don't think you have a true account of the affair to which you allude. And since I feel that you are a friend —

FALK. You have none better —

SOPHIE. Then you ought to know the truth. My truth. Here is a letter which I received from him one hour ago. From him.

FALK. From him? From the young chap sporting the hunting cap? My chess opponent?

SOPHIE. You referred to him, didn't you? Or did you suspect an escapade with some one else? It's a letter from the young man with whom I seemed to you to be so taken up, emotionally and otherwise, that I allowed the affair between my husband and Daisy to take its natural course. Would you care to read it?

FALK. Typed, is it? No? Oh, you will have to excuse me, Sophie. Read it to me yourself with your dark resonant voice.

SOPHIE. I'll read only a few lines which, I think, will clear up everything for you. Just a minute. *[Turns pages and reads.]* "I have just learnt, dear madam, that you are still in Brioni and as ever, alone. Since you left the Attersee lakeside before me and have not, to my knowledge, arrived at Vienna, it follows that you have not seen your husband for two months." *[Interrupts herself.]* The letter was forwarded to me here.

[Reads further.] “It is not my intention to force myself into your private affairs, nor to attempt to penetrate what appears a self-chosen reticence. Whatever has happened, whatever your plans are, I must not presume to be concerned any further than you will allow. But, if I may, I should like to remind you of one hour — a wonderful hour on the shore of the lake just before sunset—” A wonderful sunset, while my husband and Daisy and her fiancé were out sailing in the distance.

FALK. Is that what our friend means by “wonderful”? He is undoubtedly referring to something that happened between you and him —

SOPHIE. It was the hour when he dared utter his feelings, for the first and only time. No, he didn’t utter them. He betrayed them in a quiet but moving way. By kissing my hand! That was all.

FALK. That may be much.

SOPHIE. At all events, you must admit, that my transgression was very slight.

FALK. All the more praiseworthy, because he’s such a handsome, clean-cut fellow. I’ve rarely gotten along with anybody so well. His personality gives out a kind of wood smell. I welcome an unliterary chap like that as a godsend. I’ll bet he never wrote a play in his life.

SOPHIE. Ah, yes. They’ve something original to offer, these simple good people who are no geniuses.

FALK. Good. What a word! That wonderful hour on the shore of the lake — I’m inclined to think it depended entirely on you and the good —

SOPHIE. You don’t know him, if you say that. Even at that moment his intentions were — well, honorable. Just as they are now. And he clears himself, as you will see, in the letter. Let me read the ending. *[She turns the pages.]*

FALK. You’re skipping a good deal.

SOPHIE *[reading]*. “Just the same — I am just as I was in the summer. When you need a friend, call on me or, better still, come yourself—”

FALK. Come yourself?

SOPHIE. Listen to the rest. *[Reads.]* “My life belongs to you. I am all alone and absolutely free. If you are free too, Frau Sophie, as free as I suppose you to be—”

FALK *[brusquely]* His conjecture is wrong, quite wrong. Have you written him so?

SOPHIE. The letter came only an hour ago.

FALK. “Come yourself.” Not bad, that. The fellow seems daft about inviting everybody to his hunting-lodge at Klein-Reifling.

SOPHIE. Everybody?

FALK. Yes. He's invited me this summer. "If," said he, "you'd care to get away from the theatrical groove, come out to Klein-Reifling. Wonderful country, you know. We can play chess every evening. You don't have to shoot deer, if you don't care to." I don't suppose he asked you to shoot, either, Sophie.

SOPHIE *[dropping the letter].* Ah, how stupid we are! Why are we humans created with the power to ruin the lives of people who are innocent and who don't understand the meaning of it all?

FALK. Understand? Can't Herbot charge you with a want of understanding? Was he as bad as you make him out? Does he bother about the happiness of others? What are other people to him? To him who is accustomed always to play the leading part? Supernumeraries — people who never get a curtain call and die ingloriously behind the scenes! You can do no wrong to such people when you're composed of heroic stuff yourself — What is it? —

SOPHIE. He — he is coming. I hear his footstep and my heart's going pit-a-pat, like a young girl's. Oh, it's sheer faint-heartedness.

FALK. On the contrary. It's just as it should be.

[Conrad Herbot enters. He is a man of about 45 with dark curly hair and a pair of grey-striped black eyes. He is wearing an overcoat and hat.]

HERBOT. Good evening. *[Slaps Falk on the shoulder.]* Well, what do you say, old chap? Now I'm at home, as it were, even though this happens to be — for the time being — nothing better than a room in a hotel. *[Pats Sophie's cheek.]* Good evening, dear. *[To Falk.]* She's looking extremely well, isn't she? And pretty too? Let me tell you, it's quite cozy now that she's come back.

FALK. I second that.

HERBOT. The last few hours have brought me back to my old self quite remarkably, and it's almost as if it had never been otherwise. The two months are dead and forgotten. Hola! Hola!

SOPHIE. But I was away, wasn't I? You speak now as the Berliners do.

HERBOT *[removing his overcoat].* Of course. Of all things, she can't bear that. *[Exaggerating the Viennese accent.]* Goin' to be good from now on, little dearie?

FALK. Well, I'll leave you two together — newly-weds just home from church.

SOPHIE. Won't you stay for a cup of coffee?

FALK. Thanks. I really can't stay any longer. *[Sophie rings.]*

HERBOT. Are you leaving us again so soon?

FALK. I've been here an hour already. Where have you been gadding about at this hour?

HERBOT *[glancing at the clock].* Good Heavens, it's half past six already. Ah, but there's a great fascination in walking about the streets when you know there's someone at home waiting for you.

FALK. Only, as I remember, it wasn't quite fascinating for the person who had to wait. Well, see you later at the theatre. *[To Sophie.]* I've kept your box for you. Outside of that the house is all sold out.

HERBOT. A work of art!

FALK. Goodbye.

HERBOT. Now that you're here, I want to reiterate that you don't pay me half the salary that's coming to me. So long! Will you be in the box too?

FALK. On one condition: that you will play your part with some degree of intelligence.

HERBOT. You villain! In honor of this glorious day, suppose we drop into the Kannenberg after the play and open a pottle of Sec —

SOPHIE. Conrad!

HERBOT. What — is it, my dear? Oh, alright. *[Mimicking the Viennese.]* Let's have some suds instead and a plate of goulash. Eh? What do you say to that?

FALK. That depends on Sophie.

[Waiter enters, receives orders from Sophie and goes out.]

HERBOT *[catching sight of the manuscript]*. What's that?

FALK. The play I spoke about this morning.

HERBOT. Another? Thank God Sophie's here at least. My vacation, I perceive, is over at last. I have about a half dozen of them over there. Believe me, Falk, I tried my hardest to look through one and then another; and the result is a brain-storm.

FALK. Did you ever hear anything like it? *[To Sophie.]* The foremost names in the German dramatic world.

HERBOT. Well, I should like awfully to say something straight out to you, Falk. To me every play at the reading seems pure twaddle. And in the majority of cases I am right. As a matter of fact, with many, when you see them on the stage —

FALK. With Conrad Herbot in the leading part.

HERBOT. That never did hurt any play. Doubtless you sometimes feel as I do, that all this theatrical clap-trap is the merest flummery. Backdrop and wings! The curtain goes up and the curtain goes down, and nine times out of ten the fellow who trafficks on the boards is a blackguard of the —

FALK. Leave him alone.

HERBOT. Upon my word, we're the most paradoxical people in the world, we actor-folk. In private life, I grant you quite rational — quite. Then we strike a pose behind the footlights and mouth some bit got by rote, just as if we meant it in all seriousness. We enter and we exist and out front the audience sit gaping and

whispering behind their palms. Incredible! That they should fall for such a thing. Do you know what I think at times? That this so-called art of the theatre is simply an invention of the box-office.

FALK. A powerful and eke a profound observation!

HERBOT. True, isn't it? And yet if the public were informed of this fact, it would ruin your business, wouldn't it? Well, for the time being I'm going to keep it to myself; but some day, I don't mind telling you, I'm going to write an article to this tune — when the time is ripe — It would make a splendid Christmas supplement. The public's very fond of that sort of thing.

FALK. You'd better wait a bit, that is, until you've stopped drawing a salary. Next year perhaps or the year after.

HERBOT. Oh yes, that would suit you to a dot. You want to lay by a pile meanwhile. Well, good luck to you, if you can do it. Oh, and by the way, if there's going to be a raft of junk cluttering the doorway of my dressing room the same as yesterday, during *Tasso,* I'll raise such a rumpus ——

FALK. And if you fill your dressing room with cigarette smoke again, I'll give you two weeks' notice —

HERBOT. Just what I'm waiting for. Then I'll be able to lead a normal life for the rest of my days. Lying at ease on the grass and gazing up at the blue sky, or with a gun plopping through the meadows and the fertile fields —

FALK. With a gun?

HERBOT. Certainly. It's not a bad substitute for the stage.

FALK. Did my chess opponent, the fellow with the green hat, invite you too?

HERBOT. Herr von Bolschau. Of course he did.

FALK. It's an obsession with him.

HERBOT. Charming fellow, Bolschau is. Ask Sophie. She likes him too. Isn't that so, dear? *[In Berlinese.]* We know whom to like and whom not to like, don't we, my dear? —

FALK. I won't let you go. You've no business in Klein-Reifling. Well, auf Wiedersehen. I invite myself to your box, Sophie. *[Goes.]*

HERBOT. What a soul that man has! In our last contract I fell beautifully for him. Well, he'll have to shell out or I sail for America. On this side they pay starvation salaries. Well, Sophie *[drawing her to him]*, here we are together again. But tell me, please. Did you intend to leave me for good?

SOPHIE. Here I am, back again. So let's not talk about it. Let's forget it.

HERBOT. Oh, if one only could! You've no idea what I suffered while you were away. I wasn't myself at all. I walked about as in a dream — as in an evil dream. And I played comedy parts like a swine. Not always — but most of the time.

SOPHIE. Yes, that's exactly what Falk says.

HERBOT. What? The impudence! I was all right for I don't know how long. I was good enough, even for the public. Too good! You should penetrate the man first. For a measly hundred marks he'd cut his throat. But they're all the same, every one of them. He's spreading the rumor about that I'm going back home. But nobody believes him. They have eyes and ears, thank Heaven! The public is mine. Now, and for a long time to come. And more than ever, now — now that you have come back — now, believe me. Without you I am lost. That's the truth. I should have given up the legitimate stage and gone into vaudeville. In vaudeville there's a better chance to travel and, on the whole, it pays better.

[The waiter brings tea, pastry and sets the tea-table.]

HERBOT. I'll tell you what: In February I'm going to take time out and we'll go to the Riviera. I won't accept your "no." By God, I've earned it. Since the time I was a boy I've longed to go there, and today I am 43. Connected almost twenty seven years with the theatre. Twenty seven. "At the age of sixteen, a mere youngster, he ran away" — but you know the rest. *[Waiter goes out.]*

SOPHIE *[pouring tea].* Until today I've been unable to find out from whom you ran away. Your parents were reconciled to the idea of your going on the stage.

HERBOT. Why, of course. You see, at the age of 14, I acted all kinds of parts at home. "The late lamented actor by appointment at the Hoftheatre at Bayreuth, Herr Story, who in the youngster devoted to Thespis—" and so on. *[Notices the card.]* Who is Vilma Flamm?

SOPHIE. Vilma Flamm is a young lady.

HERBOT. What kind of a young lady?

SOPHIE. A young artiste with whom you had an engagement here.

HERBOT. An engagement?

SOPHIE. You were going to see if she had any talent. She wrote you eight days ago.

HERBOT. Oh yes, the little goose! I hope you speedily showed her the door.

SOPHIE. Of course. But you had an appointment with her.

HERBOT. Not unlikely. You know sometimes one replies and sometimes one doesn't. Was anybody else here?

SOPHIE. Not today.

HERBOT. Well, if that sort come, just put them out. You have *plein pouvoir.* I don't give try-outs, I do not instruct. I do not write in autograph albums. On the other hand, *it* may have been a blackmailer. I'll be hanged if I can remember the name of Vilma Flamm. *[They sit at the tea-table.]*

SOPHIE. You always had a poor memory.

HERBOT. You don't expect me to have a memory for such things. Just consider what I must cram into my head, as it is. The godlike words of the master creations of our great poets — and all that modern rot, besides. Naturally there's hardly any room for anything else.

SOPHIE. For nothing at all?

HERBOT. To be quite frank, the function is under my control. I remember and I forget, just as it pleases me. And I assure you, Sophie — I know what's passing through your mind now — if I should casually meet a certain lady in the street, I'd cut her without a moment's hesitation. I should not recognize her at all. If I should attempt to recall her features, it would be in vain.
She is a shadow, a ghost, your old grandmother, if you like.

SOPHIE *[bursting out]*. How could you do it?

HERBOT. Yes, how could I do it?

SOPHIE. Her fiancé was your friend.

HERBOT. Not friend; hardly that. Still, I confess, it was a rascally thing to do. And, being aware of that, I was amply prepared to pay the price.

SOPHIE. You were — when were you prepared?

HERBOT. That very morning, Sophie. When I returned home from her arms — I beg your pardon — and found you gone and your farewell note. Those terrible words! When I realized that I had lost you — lost you for ever, do you know what agony I suffered? I resolved then to go to him, confess what a scoundrel I was and frankly tell him that I had betrayed my wife and seduced his fiancée — and so on. For hours and hours in the early morning dusk I wandered along the river-bank and fought a terrific struggle with myself, until I saw that I dared not do it. If only for the sake of Daisy's family. But they were gloomy days to bear, Sophie, those last five days in our country villa — and perhaps the greatest ordeal of all was the need of lying, the need of going on lying.

SOPHIE. You mean —?

HERBOT. Well, you see I had to find some plausible excuse for your sudden departure. And so in my desperation, I invented the yarn or a drain bursting in our Berlin apartment. Oh, I sketched in the details — details, whole letters from you, humorous turns of expression. Can you imagine it! In this way I had to drag on my life, on my lips a drain burst and in my heart — death. Yes, dearest, it was by no means easy to live out the day as if nothing had happened; taking your morning bath as before, eating breakfast, sailing —

SOPHIE. As if nothing had happened. Both day and night.

HERBOT. Sophie, upon my word, on that day when you went away I was done with —

SOPHIE. Don't pledge your word. Oaths are not necessary in reference to the past. The past is buried, dead and buried.

HERBOT. Yes, buried a long time ago.

SOPHIE. But the future, that belongs to us, if you are willing.

HERBOT. If I am willing? If I am — Sophie, dear!

SOPHIE. And I beg of you, Conrad, above all things be truthful. It is the one thing I demand of you. I can understand everything. I can forgive everything. Only, I beg of you, don't put on the comic spirit. Don't — in my presence. It isn't necessary. Everything which you have just said, was not you. There was an occasional gleam which shone through your mask, but you — your inmost self — it was not that; that *you,* I mean, which abides in the recesses of self, very deep within. And I cannot resist the feeling that that which you are is somehow good — somehow — and on that I place my trust. You've only got to believe in it yourself. Deep in the beginnings of your consciousness, I feel — oh so vividly — that you are a mere child, nothing but a child. So —

HERBOT. A child? There may be a good deal in what you say. I have something to confess to you, Sophie. Whenever I start introspecting or dreaming about myself, I invariably see myself not as a somewhat mature person with iron grey hair, but rather as a small boy who is always being led by the hand of somebody, by his father or his tutor, though, to be sure, I never had a tutor. I'm quite amazed sometimes — but you must promise me not to let this go further — that people talk to me as if I were quite rational and wholly grown-up; while I feel an irresistible impulse to say to them, "Please let me be. I can't make head or tail of your twaddle. By nature I am alien to your confidence." Yes indeed, Sophie, that was a singularly apt observation — I am a child. *[A knock is heard.]* Who the deuce can that be? Come in. *[Enter boy with card.]*

HERBOT *[ignoring it].* I am not at home. *[Reads the card and starts.]* Eh?

SOPHIE. What is it? *[Takes the card out of his hand.]* Edgar Gley — Edgar —

HERBOT. You heard what I said. I am not at home to any one. I play tonight and I am busy.

SOPHIE. You must see him, Herbot.

HERBOT. Must? I don't see that.

SOPHIE *[to the Bell-hop].* Wait a minute.

HERBOT. Where is the gentleman waiting?

BELL-HOP. In the lobby, sir.

SOPHIE *[under her breath to Herbot].* You can't avoid this interview. The sooner it is over, the better.

HERBOT. Show the gentleman in. *[Bell-hop goes.]*

SOPHIE *[anxiously and quite earnestly].* Conrad —

HERBOT. What is it? Certainly it shows lack of consideration just before *Hamlet. [Walking back and forth.]*

SOPHIE. Are you sure you haven't heard from him since?

HERBOT. I've told you, haven't I? Not for two months — it's quite incredible that he should suspect anything. It can't be about her.

SOPHIE. HOW does he come to be here, in Berlin? She's in Vienna. Last we heard of him he was in Villach attached to the governor's suite — and suddenly he is here.

HERBOT. On furlough, no doubt. After all, Berlin's a rather interesting city ——

SOPHIE. Are you sure you weren't imprudent. You must have climbed through her window at night. Someone must have seen you —

HERBOT. Certainly not he. Otherwise he'd have paid me a visit before today.

SOPHIE. Nonsense! This once I give you leave to lie.

HERBOT. Thanks for the privilege. You can trust me when it comes to that. But now suppose you go into the salon. If you should stay within hearing, I might — and I want unlimited freedom. If I felt that you were eavesdropping, I'd be uncertain about myself. Now —

SOPHIE *[anxiously].* Conrad —

HERBOT. Be at rest, dearest. [*He caresses her hair. As he is about to draw her close to him, she fends him off gently and goes into the adjoining room. For a space he remains motionless, then takes up the discarded manuscript, turns the pages idly and at length lights a cigarette. Growing perceptibly impatient, he rises, goes to the door on the right and listens. There is a knock. He tiptoes noiselessly back into the centre of the room and pretends to be absorbed in reading the manuscript. There is a second knock.]*

HERBOT. Come in. *[Edgar Gley enters.]*

EDGAR. Good evening.

HERBOT. Good evening, Mr. Gley. I'm delighted to see you, even though this be only an hotel apartment.

EDGAR. I don't wish to keep you long, Mr. Herbot.

HERBOT. You know I play tonight.

EDGAR. I know.

HERBOT. I have about a quarter of an hour to spare. Won't you take a seat? My wife will regret missing —

EDGAR *[slightly taken aback].* Your wife — is here?

HERBOT. Of course. Where then should she be? She went away for a couple of weeks — Ah, you know our apartment was in a terrible mess. You remember, don't you? I believe I told you about it — a drain burst. Tomorrow or the day after tomorrow it will be in shipshape again. The place was almost flooded. Quite a bother, let me tell you. And ten thousand marks' damage at the very lowest estimate. When everything is

repaired, we will entertain as before. I regret most of all the loss of several irreplaceable specimens of handwriting. I am, as you are aware, a collector of ancient examples of handwriting. Are you interested in that sort of thing? *[Edgar starts to speak but restrains himself as if lacking courage.]*

HERBOT *[noticing the effort]*. But I see I'm boring you about myself and my affairs. How is your fiancée? I presume you've just come from Vienna.

EDGAR. No, straight from Villach. I have something to ask you, Mr. Herbot. Please answer "yes" or "no." Were you Daisy's lover?

HERBOT *[rising]*. I —? Mr. Gley, I'm afraid I do not follow you. What evil-minded — slander-monger —

EDGAR. It is quite obvious that you must take this stand. But it is equally obvious that nothing is proved by your disavowal. *[Herbot is about to interrupt.]* Your word of honor proves nothing either.

HERBOT. Unfortunately a man has nothing outside his word of honor which he can call his own. There are people who would be satisfied with Conrad Herbot's mere word of honor.

EDGAR. In a matter of this sort, do you think? Unfortunately I'm not in a position to —

HERBOT. Well, at all events, will you tell me from what source you got your information? Will you be good enough to show me the anonymous letter? I shall soon prove to you —

EDGAR. Let's not trifle about that. I ask you again: — Were you Daisy's lover?

HERBOT. Since you don't care to reveal the source of this brazen — no, the grounds of your libellous suspicion; and since you make it impossible for me to defend, frankly to deny the charge, I therefore propose to you, Mr. Gley, that we leave the young woman entirely out of the discussion and confine ourselves to the simple fact that my nose is an eyesore to you. I promise you that I shall feel as injured as you please and — we will arrange to meet in one of those delightful little glades yonder!

EDGAR. Mr. Herbot, I don't feel disposed to doubt your mood and, I take it, there is no question about mine. Don't let's go through a scene of high-sounding words. Mr. Herbot, we want, if possible, — and to me it is possible — to talk like two men — no, let alone every vanity and every question of honor in the accepted sense, like two human beings. I ask you for the last time, Mr. Herbot, please to abandon the manner you have assumed thus far. I don't for a moment question the correctness of it. But please understand that a human being confronts you now, Mr. Herbot, one who demands nothing but the truth, whatever it may be. You follow me, Mr. Herbot? One who, however poignant it may be, is ready to bear it. Understand me, please, Mr. Herbot, I come neither in the guise of a fool nor as an avenger to one who is either a knave or who has been unjustly so accused. Human to human! If it fell out as I suspect, Mr. Herbot, it probably was no dastardly act. If otherwise, then it wasn't very far from it. But no matter what has happened, nothing in the world could force us to face one another with pistols so that one of us might — *[Herbot starts to speak.]*

EDGAR. Not yet. You're going to go on lying, I suppose. But please listen to what I have to say. I have lived through many things — I know what a mere fragrance, what the perfume of summer evenings can do with us. I know, too, how far behind us we can thrust our lot like a dream which has been told as a tale by a stranger.

And I know that I am prepared to endure anything, except uncertainty. I can forgive everything but lies. See how easy the truth is made for you! I trust you are beginning to understand. Or do you suspect perhaps that I am laying a trap for you, unawares. I have, I think, surrendered myself completely into your hands, Mr. Herbot. I've stood here like the most pitiful clown. If I had wanted to take advantage of your confession and entrap you and then to reassume the affronted bridegroom; if this were so, you would be at liberty to deny me all satisfaction, spit in my face for, whatever you may have done, I should have been viler than you by far. Can you hesitate still, Mr. Herbot? Never, I feel, has one man spoken to another as I have done to you. Were you Daisy's lover? You are silent? You must speak. You must speak the truth, before it is too late. Yes, Mr. Herbot, before it is too late. For should I casually learn the truth later — and things of this sort are known to exist; there are such things as belated confessions by women — then I won't fight a duel with you, then I'd strike you down like a —

HERBOT. Stop. Go no further. I — I am at your disposal. Yes, at your disposal? There is no way out of this for you or me.

EDGAR. Then you were Daisy's —

HERBOT. I was not. And yet one of us must die.

EDGAR. The truth! The truth! Mr. Herbot.

HERBOT. What are words —? Now if someone had predicted — I beg your pardon, I can't say more. *[He goes to the window apparently moved. However, unobserved of Edgar he steals a glance at the clock. For a space he remains standing at the window.]*

EDGAR. Speak out, Mr. Herbot.

HERBOT *[turning toward him again]*. Child of man, how simple the world appears to you! Yes and no; truth and falsehood; faith and deception. Oh, if it were only as simple as that, young fr — Mr. Gley. But it is not as simple as that. By Heaven, if I were of your mould, it would be the easiest thing in the world, in order to set your troubled mind at rest, to answer your question exactly as you've asked it. Yes, it would be the easiest thing in the world if somebody else had come instead of you — you, Edgar Gley, who have been a stranger to me until now. If somebody else had come — one of the dozens of commonplace folk whose life does not touch mine, I should have let him go back to the banal world whence he came. To him I might say — no, swear that nothing happened. But, at the risk of your calling me inhuman, I cannot answer you that way. For it would be the most cowardly of lies. It would be one of those lies one could swear to before the law. And behind it all, there would still be something unsaid, simple yet different — confoundedly simple, don't you know? And that would be to answer: — It happened, Mr. Gley. Daisy was my mistress — and then to take you at your word, to dismiss you and exult that the way is clear and to flatter myself again with hope, like an old fool, that now that the young chap, the lover, the fiancé is out of the way, the impossible will come to pass. And one's maddest wish would be granted. And can you be certain that you will not be up to these damnable tricks when you're not over-clever. You don't perceive, fool that you are, that the dream cannot last; that it must perish with disillusionment, regret and denunciation. Well, Edgar Gley, I loved your fiancé. I adored her. I wanted to break away from my wife. I loved Daisy — like a schoolboy. I didn't keep my love a secret from her. I wrote verses to her — old Herbot, mind you, wrote verses, paced back and forth under her

window, stole softly into her garden, threw his tender billets-doux, like Romeo, through the window — *[Pauses suddenly as if something had just occurred to him.]* Ah, now I see everything. Someone must have seen me. Someone must have spied me one night in the garden or perhaps in the wherry directly opposite the house. But who can it have been? You've received anonymous letters: admit it.

EDGAR. That's unimportant. Go on.

HERBOT. What else do you want to know?

EDGAR. You made love to Daisy — and she quietly let you.

HERBOT. Let me — I can't deny it.

EDGAR. Read your letters? *[Herbot smiles.]* And replied to them? Please answer.

HERBOT. You will not begrudge me that, Mr. Gley.

EDGAR. I am sorry.

HERBOT *[with the express purpose of discounting the truth of the words he is about to utter].* I possess nothing in writing —

EDGAR. Mr. Herbot, lies are lies. If you seek to mislead me regarding a minor detail, how do I know that the rest also —

HERBOT. Don't persist in that belief. Let's break off right here.

EDGAR. Impossible.

HERBOT. Well, then, there's nothing else I can do. Do as you please, Mr. Gley. I am entirely at your disposal —

EDGAR. You've gone too far to hold back now. I promise you that no one will learn the gist of this conversation — not even my fiancée. Don't torture me any longer. You have my word of honor.

HERBOT *[after a rapid pause, rummages in his pocket and extracts a letter].* Here's a letter from Daisy to me. *[After an involuntary start of Edgar's.]* Allow me to read it. Later you can verify whether I have omitted a syllable. But it must be heard in the proper tone, otherwise it might be misunderstood. *[Reads.]* "Conrad Herbot, I beg of you, go away."

EDGAR. When was this written?

HERBOT *[showing date].* August 27th, A. M. *[Reads.]* "Don't bring unhappiness to people who have never wronged you. Do not forget, Conrad Herbot, what you've meant to me long before I ever knew you. Let that suffice. When I see you again on the stage in one of your glorious—" Ah, let's skip that. "Never has a man of your sort—" Rather poignant, this! Miss Daisy simply means that she's never had a man, about whom she used to read in the papers, make love to her. And so and so on. But please listen carefully. *[Reads.]* "Remember that you have a fascinating wife who loves you and that I am engaged to one who loves me

dearly and whose love I return. Yes, Conrad Herbot, I love him and I will never love anybody else. But you, Conrad Herbot, are perilous — that's the only way I can express it. Sometimes I feel as if I hate you. I implore you to go away — please go away."

EDGAR *[taking the letter].* On the 27th and you went away —?

HERBOT. Several hours later.

EDGAR. And if you had stayed —?

HERBOT. Mr. Gley, I might have stayed without harm. Through this letter I first grew aware of my "perilousness" so called. Until then —

EDGAR. But you yourself just said that you intended to —

HERBOT. Uproot you from Daisy's heart? Yes. I don't deny it. I was a fool. This letter brought me to my senses with a shock. "I will never love anybody else."

EDGAR. But she wavered. This letter proves it beyond a doubt. She wavered between you and me. And it depended altogether on you —

HERBOT *[interrupting].* I'd believe that too, if I were still the fool today I was for about half an hour. She's always been yours. But when it comes to fame — Ah, my young friend, you've no idea what a pretty dance that leads a young girl's heart? We never know, we poor mortals, whether it is genuine passion or simply the fragrance of immortality wafting about us. Quite frankly, I envy the men who have never had to doubt whether they were loved for themselves alone. Were I not Conrad Herbot, but the same as any other man — a landed proprietor from Klein-Reifling, for instance, — doubtless I should have appeared ridiculous to your fiancée. But Conrad Herbot went daft about her — and that touched her a bit. She realized quite clearly that she was Conrad Herbot's last love, and I suppose a moment came when she almost believed the emotion to be love. She's not the first who's felt that way. But guilty — if I may mention the word in the same breath with all this — I was guilty, I alone. It would never have gone as far as it did, not even up to the letters, if I'd been able to conceal my feelings. But that was beyond me. Like a fatality it swept over me.

EDGAR. You intended to leave your wife, you said a moment ago. She went away before you —

HERBOT *[cutting in quickly].* Not on account of the pipe-leak. You may rest assured of that. She went away because I was unable to cover up the true state of my emotions. I kept no secrets from her. She's a wonderful woman. Directly upon receiving this letter and my flight from Daisy, I told her all about it. I begged her to come to me, to stand by me, to rescue me from utter despair. But she thought it unworthy to live with me so long as my heart was given to another. She wanted to come back only when I could write to her with a peaceful conscience that the last embers were extinguished. Three days ago. I found that I could write her that. She's been here since yesterday, and tomorrow old Herbot will be in his home again.

EDGAR. Why didn't she tell me all this?

HERBOT. Can't you really guess, Mr. Gley, how near she was to doing it? How often the confession surged to her lips? I — I have seen it. Thank God, it's turned out differently. It would have been a terrible awakening

for us all.

EDGAR. Why was she silent?

HERBOT. Shall I tell you? Because, possessing an instinct of refinement, she knew that that which externally appeared to you in the light of a confession was in reality a bald-faced lie. She never loved me, Mr. Gley. That must be apparent to you. Never. And I venture that you, Mr. Gley, may go through the wedding ceremony with a more beautiful sense of security than many another young fellow who, as the saying is, has nothing with which to reproach his fiancée. Miss Daisy, as it were, has had her escapade. And, I am sure, that the day will come when she'll tell it to you herself. She will tell it to you even before you lead her to the altar. And, if you wish to oblige me, wait until then. Don't broach the subject yourself. *[Seeing Edgar is silent.]* How absurd of me! Of course you won't be able to keep your lips locked that long. Of course you're going to tell her everything. You'll tell her that I showed you the letter too —

EDGAR *[after cursorily glancing through it again, flings it into the fire.]* Never, as sure as you see it burning to ashes! Of this letter nothing shall be said. And nothing shall be said of this visit of mine.

HERBOT. Don't promise too much, Mr. Gley.

EDGAR *[looks at him]*. I promise no more than I think I can keep. Goodbye, Mr. Herbot.

HERBOT. You've something else to ask me, Mr. Gley?

EDGAR *[staring straight at him a long time].* Nothing whatever. *[Impulsively extending his hand.]*

HERBOT *[almost genuinely].* Be good to her, Mr. Gley. Please be good to her. *[Edgar goes.]*

[Herbot returns from the door with a serious expression at first, then a self-satisfied but not quite frivolous smile flits across his face. He glances at the clock. He makes a gesture indicating that there's ample time yet. Rings. Bell-hop enters.]

HERBOT. Will you please ask my wife to come up? She's in the lobby. *[Bell-hop goes out. Sophie comes in from the left.]*

HERBOT *[turning round and catching sight of her]*. Oh! you were —

SOPHIE. Yes, all the time.

HERBOT. But you promised me — Ah, I understand. Perhaps it's better so. I hope you are satisfied.

SOPHIE. Quite.

HERBOT. It wasn't easy, I assure you. At the outset I was seized with something like a first-night nervous fit. Though I wasn't unprepared. I *was* weak at the beginning.

SOPHIE. Well, you carried it off —

HERBOT. But didn't it come a cropper as I went along? You thought it quite different, dearest, didn't you?

That I'd disavow everything? But only fools disavow, sane people —

SOPHIE. Lie.

HERBOT. Lie? No, Sophie, don't think it was unadulterated falsehood. Part of it was true. That's the rare thing about it: the way the truth was interwoven with the falsehood. That's why it looked so plausible. Well, thank Heaven, we can breathe freely again.

SOPHIE. You think —? Have you forgotten already? Suppose he should by chance learn the truth later — you know what he threatened to do. And he will learn the truth. It's only deferred.

HERBOT. Nonsense! He'll never get at the truth. That's quite sure.

SOPHIE. Sure? He'll talk to me. Don't fool yourself about that. And I daresay contradictions will crop up.

HERBOT. Contradictions? Why?

SOPHIE. Especially in the story about the letter. How will you explain away the trumped-up letter?

HERBOT. Trumped-up? It was real.

SOPHIE. The letter was real —?

HERBOT. Certainly it was. Daisy actually wrote it. But not on the 27th of August. On the 2nd. It was a simple matter to interpolate the 7.

SOPHIE. I don't quite understand.

HERBOT. But, sweetheart, it's quite a simple matter. The contingency of some chatter-box gassing about us had to be taken into consideration. It seemed likely that an anonymous letter or something of the sort would come up. And so I arranged with Daisy what we would do if something like that happened. It was evident that a bare denial would not clear the air. And so this occurred to us to pull us through.

SOPHIE. Ah, indeed. Very clever. Now I'm beginning to understand —

HERBOT. And the letter — I read it beautifully, did I not? It seemed as if created for the purpose — how shall I put it? — just to serve us with an alibi.

SOPHIE. Extraordinary.

HERBOT. There are no other letters. Nor any other evidence of any shape. And, you may be sure, that Daisy will take care of her end of the affair.

SOPHIE. We hope so. But I don't think she'll come any way near you in that.

HERBOT. Maybe better. A girl of her sort — Trust women for that. They're born with the instinct. But, aside from that, don't you think he was capital?

SOPHIE. He?

HERBOT. Edgar Gley. Surely he had the easier task. But shall I tell you something in confidence, Sophie? There were moments when I was literally swept along and little else was needed that I should have believed the whole story myself.

SOPHIE. What story?

HERBOT. Oh, you overheard it. Somewhere near the close of the scene. It seemed as if nothing, absolutely nothing had existed between the girl and myself. It was like a stroke of genius, you might say. *[Falk comes in wearing his overcoat and carrying his hat in his hand]*

FALK. Are you out of your mind? Here it is a quarter to seven! What's the matter?

HERBOT. Do you think it takes me an hour to get into Hamlet's togs?

FALK. Paragraph seven:— "All performers in the current production must be in their dressing rooms— "Besides, the crown prince is going to be present.

HERBOT. Really, and the princess?

FALK. And suite.

HERBOT. NOW, Sophie, what do you say to that? I can still draw the best people to the stalls even though he's about disgusted them with his tomfoolery. Haven't you gone and raised the price of seats? Later on over a pottle of Sec we'll talk seriously about the terms of my new contract. Particularly the clause referring to my leave of absence. In February we intend taking a trip to the Riviera. Isn't that so, Sophie?

FALK. Are you or are you not going to —

HERBOT. Well, Sophie, get ready as quickly as you can. Today I'm going to play only for you. As far as I am concerned, let his Majesty or the Lord be present.

FALK. I'll bet you wouldn't be a bit surprised if the Lord came to Berlin expressly to witness your Hamlet.

HERBOT. If he came, he'd get a ticket to Rheinhardt's. Don't you think so?

FALK. In any case, it would be in the papers.

HERBOT *[quickly caressing Sophie on the cheek and kissing her forehead]*. Addio. A rivederci! *[Takes his hat and overcoat and goes out.]*

FALK. He's in fine spirits. You're not quite as gay. You stand there for all the world like a piece of sculpture. What's the matter? Scenes? Again?

SOPHIE *[motionless]*. No, never again. Everything's at an end.

FALK *[after a brief pause]*. Well, aren't you going to dress for the theatre? Auf Wiedersehen.

SOPHIE. I'm not going to the theatre. I'm leaving.

FALK. What do you mean?

SOPHIE. Tonight — in an hour. Everything is over and done with.

FALK. What's the matter?

SOPHIE. I can't tell you in a word.

FALK. Oh, I don't want to appear too pressing. I can do without the scene with the ghost, with Hamlet's father I mean. But, if you still regard me as a friend —

SOPHIE. Why should I? *[After a short pause.]* Edgar Gley was here.

FALK. Oh!

SOPHIE. He wanted an explanation. My husband gave it to him. I was in the next room the whole time? I overheard everything.

FALK. Well?

SOPHIE. I never suspected a man could lie that way.

FALK. Did you think —? You ought to be glad.

SOPHIE. The whole thing was preconcerted and planned between him and the girl. They anticipated it. And my husband told the young fellow a story about his being daft about the girl and that she was indifferent to his attentions. And the truth is, he visited her night after night by scaling the window.

FALK. Well, you couldn't expect him to tell Mr. Gley that, could you? It's much better to lie artfully in these affairs than not at all.

SOPHIE. You should have heard it. And he suspected nothing and was quite happy about it. Oh, if you had heard it you would now understand why it's impossible for me to live one day longer, no, one hour with this man —

FALK. But where are you going?

SOPHIE. HOW should I know? Away — away.

FALK. Don't you really know?

SOPHIE. What?

FALK. Where you want to run away to. Or do you imagine —

SOPHIE. If it were as you insinuate, do you think I would have needed a subterfuge to go? I am going to no one! I simply want to go away, and I want to be alone — for the rest of my life alone.

FALK. That'll never do. You must return in two weeks. I can't give you a longer leave of absence than that.

Our contract —

SOPHIE. How can you jest about it? Don't you understand? It is over and done with forever. Nothing remains, nothing but nausea, no, horror, an overwhelming horror of it all. How can I go back to him? One can go back to a man when he has failed miserably, when he has committed a crime, when he's wounded somebody unto death; one can go back to one who is repentant and to one who is not repentant. But a man must recognize what he's done. Herbot doesn't recognize it. He doesn't understand me and he doesn't understand himself and he doesn't understand anybody else. Love, hypocrisy, murder, everything which pervades reality is of no greater moment to him than if he were playing one of his parts. He and I speak different tongues, and there is no longer an interpreting medium between us. If, from the depths of my despair I were to throw myself out of the window, it would merely be the end of an act for him. The curtain falls and he goes out for his "pottle of Sec." A human being — he? A maddened harlequin, rather, who when occasion serves is also ready to play the human being. But no human being he no — *[Sinks exhausted on the divan with her face buried in her hands.]*

FALK. Too bad. Too bad.

SOPHIE. Oh, your pity is superfluous now.

FALK. But, dear lady, it needn't remain this way. How differently would this scene have touched you which he seems to have gone through with Mr. Gley, how little horrible, how much gayer, how glorious even would the scamp have appeared to you —

SOPHIE. If I had been worthy of him.

FALK. Naturally, you realize, that will never be — can never be. In this case you remained the same Sophie throughout. One always remains the same. But you should have taken things in a lighter vein. Your incredible respectability is what brings the false note into your relation with Herbot. And carrying, as you do, this weight of respectability, you know in your heart that it can not help matters. If, for instance, you were married to a man of the type of Mr. Gley, a gentleman, — to betray, as the phrase is, that sort of chap is indeed a detestable thing, because in the mind of the Mr. Gleys of the world an act of betrayal is tremendously significant, undeserved and degrading. And very often it may drive the Mr. Gleys of the world to suicide. With the Herbots it's another matter entirely. The Herbots pretend not to notice it. They pretend it even to themselves. Somehow they soon recover.

SOPHIE. You speak like a sophist of the first water.

FALK. Only in the capacity of theatrical director, I assure you.

SOPHIE *[smiling]*. As regards theatrical matters, I am, from now on, an outsider. Pardon me, I must pack. I don't want him to find me here.

FALK. Seriously, are you leaving — today? Impossible.

SOPHIE. Quite possible, believe me.

FALK. But what am I to say to him?

SOPHIE. Tell him I was too affected by his scene with Mr. Gley to stomach Hamlet into the bargain.

FALK. He'll never accept that.

SOPHIE. Well, then, tell him the truth — that — I —

FALK. Love him.

SOPHIE. No, that I hate him. And that I will never — not as long as I live —

FALK. Hush! No oaths. One should never burn one's bridges behind one. You see, one is put in a very embarrassing position trying to rebuild them.

SOPHIE *[crossing over to the left].* Goodbye.

FALK. I don't want to keep you back any longer. Good luck, only if you were to ask my advice, don't run away to utter solitude, but to something else —

SOPHIE. Really, you are —

FALK. You're not forced to do anything, not even to come back, if you don't care to. You can stay there. Perhaps that spells your lucky star. Ah, look down, Sophie. Look at the line-up of motors. Yes, I'm of the opinion that you should forgive him something.

SOPHIE. I might, if I were a theatre director.

FALK. You should, as a wife. It's almost a sacred office for you.

SOPHIE. Oho!

FALK. Forgive and — take your revenge. The latter in particular has a rumored sweetness about it. Well *auf Wiedersehen*, Sophie; *auf Wiedersehen* soon. *[Answering her look.]* Perhaps in the Styrian woods. You know I'm invited to go hunting too. Or at least to play chess. A telegram is sufficient and I come, were it only to call for you and to escort you back to one who must be, do what you may, your inevitable choice. There are less noble men, Sophie — *[The door in the rear opens and Herbot strides into the room, clad in his Hamlet costume with a half-buttoned overcoat thrown over it.]*

FALK. What —? Are you mad?

HERBOT. What's the matter? Why are you taking so long, Sophie? I peeped through the slit in the curtain and didn't see you in your box — *[Sophie replies with a frozen stare.]*

FALK *[goes up and takes him by the shoulders].* Now really, do you wish to — It's five minutes after seven.

HERBOT. Let them wait! I won't go on a fraction of a minute before Sophie is seated in her box.

SOPHIE. But — but — I haven't dressed yet.

HERBOT. I don't care! Come with me as you are.

FALK *[to Herbot].* See that you get a move on quickly, do you hear?

HERBOT. Sorry. But without her I don't move an inch. I know. I know. She made up her mind not to come at all. She's probably told you everything. Memories were raked up. But look at her, Falk. As she stands there she is like a ghost carved in marble. But come to me — come. The past is dead — stone dead. Don't you understand that yet, dear? Try not to think of my former waywardness. What, after all, do my escapades with other women matter? Why trouble about other people? I've never loved anybody but you. If you refuse to come, I won't act. For all I care, our friend here may close down his theatre.

FALK. Six thousand four hundred Marks. Of course you can make that up, can't you?

HERBOT. The nerve! If Hamlet were played by some one else, you wouldn't have half the house you've got tonight. And if you, Sophie, are not in your box, I won't act today, nor tomorrow — never again and farewell to the stage. *[He flings the sword he's been clutching from him.]*

FALK *[at the window].* There goes Her Highness.

HERBOT. A fig for Her Highness! Let her turn around and go back home, *your* Highness. There is but one High — *[He is suddenly on his knee before Sophie. A Theatre Employee enters.]*

T. E. I beg your pardon, *Herr Direktor.* It is seven-ten. His Royal Highness — the audience —

FALK *[to Employee].* Ring up the curtain.

HERBOT *[to Theatre Employee].* He says so, not I.

FALK. Ring up the curtain! *[The Theatre Employee goes.]*

SOPHIE. Get up.

HERBOT. Are you coming? *[Sophie does not reply audibly but the expression on her face answers in the affirmative.]* —

HERBOT *[rising to his feet and putting his arm about her waist, he takes the sword which Falk has picked up.]* "Was ever woman in this humor wooed?"

FALK. That isn't Hamlet. That's Richard the Third.

HERBOT. Well then, arm in arm with you — FALK. That's from something else. You will make a holy mess of the performance tonight.

HERBOT. Why must it be just from "Hamlet"? — *[Pressing Sophie close to his side.]* Isn't it a lofty line?

FALK. Are you ready? *[He thrusts them both through the door. The door for a moment affords a view in which the hotel guests, passing down the corridor, gaze astonished at the pair. Falk then turns the lights out, goes out and locks the door.]*

[CURTAIN.]

PART III. THE FESTIVAL OF BACCHUS

A COMEDY OF WORDS

PERSONS



FELIX STAUFNER, *WRITER.*

AGNES, *his wife.*

DR. GUIDO WERNIG.

RAILWAY GUARD.

WAITER.

BUFFET-DISPENSER *(a woman).*

Passengers and Station employees.

The action takes place in the railroad waiting room of a large Austrian city in the mountains.

THE FESTIVAL OF BACCHUS

[SCENE: — *STATION and restaurant. In the rear glass doors giving onto the platform. Right a stairway conducting downstairs. On the left is the buffet, with a clock above it. A number of tables, covered and uncovered, with chairs. A blackboard near the middle platform door, right. On the wall are time-tables, maps, posters. The buffet dispenser is busy behind the buffet. Several people are seated at the tables. The guard stands by the middle platform door, which is open. As the curtain rises the train has just come in. Passengers enter from the platform and pass through the dining room on the right, using the steps. On the left Agnes and Guido are standing, almost motionless, with their eyes fixed intently on the door as if expecting someone. When the last of the passengers has passed through the waiting room, Guido steps up to the door and peers out on the platform. He makes a step as if to go out but is intercepted by the guard. Agnes in the meantime has also loitered up to the door.]*

GUIDO. There's no one else.

AGNES. Strange!

GUIDO. Was that the Innsbruck train?

[The Guard locks the door.]

GUARD. No, sir.

GUIDO. No?

GUARD. That was the Bavarian express. The Innsbruck train is scheduled to arrive at 5.20.

GUIDO. Why do you say "is scheduled to arrive"?

GUARD. Because it's almost always late. However, there has been no report yet.

GUIDO. You mean that it will arrive on time?

GUARD. No, that it will be late. *[Goes of left by the steps.]*

GUIDO *[glancing at the clock].* We have fully eight minutes before us. *[Lights a cigarette.]* AGNES. Eight minutes. *[Comes down and seats herself at one of the tables.]*

[The Waiter approaches and hovers about.]

GUIDO *[after a brief pause to Agnes, standing behind her chair].* Agnes —

AGNES. Guido —?

GUIDO *[seating himself beside her].* Wouldn't it be a better idea to—'

WAITER. Your order, sir?

GUIDO. Thank you. We have just had something here.

[Waiter, slightly piqued, shrugs his shoulders and goes off left.]

GUIDO. Wouldn't it be better, I mean, if I waited for him alone?

AGNES. Why this sudden change of mind? Have you completely lost faith in my determination? Do you think that I shrink from meeting him face to face —

GUIDO. No, no. I have the greatest confidence in you. But I repeat: it's quite impossible to foretell how he'll take the news. And that's why —

AGNES *[rising fervently]*. No. We've made up our minds. We'll wait for him together. In this way the situation will at once be made clear to him. And that in itself is a big advantage. No superfluous words will be necessary. It's only fair to us — and to him. We owe him that much. Or, if you like, I at least owe it to him. [The whistle of a locomotive is heard. Agnes starts but does not turn. Guido rises. A railway employee comes from the platform, meticulously locks the door after him, and writes on the blackboard:— "Express No. 57 from Innsbruck — 44 minutes *late.* "*He intercepts a woman with two children at the door and closes it again behind him. Guido and Agnes have not turned around. The whistle of the locomotive dies away*.]

GUIDO *[close to her].* Agnes, do you love me?

AGNES. I adore you. And you?

GUIDO. You know. *[Hastily.]* And in one hour all will be over. Bear that in mind. Tomorrow we will be far away. Think of that when you face him. Together — forever!

AGNES *[somewhat mechanically],* Forever — *[without looking round]*. Hasn't it come in yet? ——

GUIDO *[turning round]*. The eight minutes are up. *[The Guard re-enters.]*

GUIDO [noticing the writing on the board]. Oh! —

AGNES *[following his glance]*. What is it?

GUIDO. Delay; forty-four minutes' delay.

GUARD. More likely an hour.

GUIDO. Here it is very plain, forty-four minutes. Forty-four! I dare say that's calculated to the dot.

GUARD *[coldly]*. Oh, she may make it in less.

[He goes over to the buffet, exchanges a few words with the coffee-dispenser, and then goes off. Guido and Agnes stare at one another.]

GUIDO. That's so.

AGNES. One hour —

GUIDO. Let's go outside a bit.

AGNES. But it hasn't stopped raining. But if you want to take a walk — I'll wait for you here.

I prefer to look at the illustrated papers. *[Sits, taking up a newspaper.]*

[Guido approaches the buffet and sets his watch by the clock.]

AGNES *[gazing at him with a smile].* He must be pretty impatient, too, in his compartment.

GUIDO *[returning to her].* How — do you mean, Agnes?

AGNES. As you know, he telegraphed that he was coming from Stubai on the five-twenty train. I fancy he's under the impression that I'm waiting for him after these six weeks of separation, and that together we'll take the train back to Seewalchen, to our villa. Well, I am waiting for him — only it isn't quite as he imagined it.

GUIDO. It would be more agreeable to me if you'd refrain from going off on a sentimental jag this way.

AGNES. Sentimental —? I? Would I be here, if I were sentimental? *[Brief pause.]*

GUIDO *[making conversation].* You've missed the six o'clock train anyway.

AGNES. There's another at seven.

GUIDO. Do you think he'll take it?

AGNES. Why not? I'll beg him to — And if you know him at all, he's the sort of man — *[Breaking off.]* He'll find everything at home as he left it. I've ordered Therese to prepare everything as if —

GUIDO. That wasn't quite necessary. If he ever loved you he will never put foot into a house in which he lived with you for five summers *[bitterly]* and happily at that.

AGNES. Yes, he will. He's awfully fond of the little cottage and the landscape. At any rate, they haven't changed.

GUIDO. I'm sure he won't go back to it this year any more.

AGNES. If he's wise, he'll go right home and sleep there tonight.

GUIDO. In a house — alive with such memories?

AGNES *[staring straight ahead of her].* Let's hope that he's already started to forget me on the return trip.

GUIDO. Do you imagine that he will?

AGNES. Well, isn't it the best thing we can wish him? — *[She takes a newspaper again and pretends to be absorbed in it.]*

GUIDO *[eyeing Agnes, paces up and down, adjusts his watch again, then stepping up to her].* We might take something. *[Taps on the table, then takes a newspaper and flutters the leaves nervously, glancing all the*

while at Agnes, who seems quite absorbed in reading, calling petulantly:] Waiter.

WAITER *[appearing, still slightly piqued].* Yes, sir.

GUIDO. Bring me — *[To Agnes.]* What'll you have?

AGNES. It's immaterial to me.

GUIDO. Well, bring two lemon sodas.

AGNES. I prefer raspberry. *[Waiter moves away. Pause. Guido fixes his eyes on Agnes.]*

AGNES *[continuing to read; smiling]*. Here's something about you.

GUIDO. About me?

AGNES. Yes. "Regatta at Attersee. First prize, Baron Ramming, yacht *Storm;* second prize, Dr. Guido Wernig, yacht *Watersprite.*"

GUIDO. Quite right. You see, such insignificant nobodies like myself do get into the papers sometimes. Of course, only on corresponding insignificant occasions — and then they capture only second prize.

AGNES. Next time it will be the first — on another See.

GUIDO. You're very optimistic. But — isn't it the hand of destiny?

AGNES *[with an inquiring glance]*. The second prize?

GUIDO. The delay, I mean. Once again you have enough time to think it over. *[She beckons him to draw nearer.]* Perhaps it isn't so simple a thing as you imagine. When you've once been the helpmate of a great man, to become the wife of a quite ordinary doctor of chemistry —

AGNES *[interrupting him quickly]*. In the first place, Guido, your factory in your particular line is quite as well known as the collected works of my husband.

GUIDO. What have I to do with the factory? My father founded it — managed it — I am only his son.

AGNES. Besides, I didn't fall in love with Felix because he was a great man, as you put it. Whoever heard of him when we were married?

GUIDO. But you foresaw it —

AGNES. Foresaw it — yes.

[Waiter comes with sodas. He places the glasses on the table. Agnes and Guido are silent. The Waiter moves away. Pause.]

GUIDO. Why are you silent, Agnes?

AGNES *[staring straight ahead]*. How mysterious life is! Six weeks ago, no more than six weeks ago, I

crossed the lake with him in the small steamboat — six weeks. I said good bye to him almost on this very spot. And how the world has changed in this short time! If he if we had guessed that bright summer day —

GUIDO. Do you regret it, Agnes? If so, there is still time.

AGNES *[as if waking from a trance]*. I regret nothing — nothing. All that has happened was destined to happen. Don't you know I realize that, Guido? And all that has happened points to our happiness together — and also to his.

GUIDO. His?

AGNES. I have no doubt he'll thank me right off seeing I've given him back his freedom. People of his sort —

GUIDO. "People of his sort—"

AGNES. Everything in life has its deeper meaning. It is well, it is perhaps profoundly necessary that he should from now on dwell in solitude.

GUIDO. In solitude —? What do you call solitude?

AGNES *[looking up]* What do you mean by that?

GUIDO. Nothing, but what you imagine yourself.

AGNES. Don't try to evade my question. You did the same once before in a similar circumstance.

GUIDO. HOW SO? When?

AGNES. On the train.

GUIDO. I'm sure my allusion is not beyond your surmise. The suspicion that not his play alone kept him in Stubaital six weeks, instead of the projected three, surely is not new to you today. You smile?

AGNES. It's a bit amusing to me the way you're trying, very obviously, to make me jealous.

GUIDO. Far from it. But, if you'll pardon my saying it, I don't see any sense in your seeking to surround your — your former husband with a kind of halo. He is every bit of a human being. In certain respects he's not a whit better than I and —

AGNES *[laughing].* And you — you wished to say. Very kind of you, I'm sure.

GUIDO. Don't misunderstand me.

AGNES. Oh, I understand you perfectly. You want me to believe that Mademoiselle X —

GUIDO. Bianca Walter —

AGNES. Whose postscript is on the picture post card, has contrived somehow to detain my husband —

GUIDO. You husband that was — Herr Felix Staufner.

AGNES. Felix —

GUIDO. I'm not trying to convince you, I merely make the statement.

AGNES. Without evidence you can prove nothing. Besides the truth will soon out.

GUIDO. How do you make that out?

AGNES. He will tell the truth.

GUIDO. In all probability you won't have to hear it. Aside from the fact that it is immaterial to you and that the moment my conjectures are confirmed you will be pleased.

AGNES. I shall be quite happy over it. Need I tell you that? Nothing more desirable could happen to me than if he stepped off the train with Fräulein Bianca or somebody else.

GUIDO. I'm afraid, Agnes, that you conceive life as too simple a thing. Mademoiselle X —

AGNES. Bianca.

GUIDO. Will not accompany him. She will remain in Stubai for the present.

AGNES. With her mother?

GUIDO. Why with her mother? Why bother about her mother?

AGNES. Because her name, too, is on the picture post card. However, I think we are doing the young lady an injustice and celebrating a little prematurely. Doubtless she is a respectable girl of good family. An admirer of my — my Felix Staufner, just like her mother. [She takes a card out of her purse and reads: "Isabella Walter and her daughter cannot omit the opportunity of gratefully sending their heartfelt greetings to the wife of the master—"

GUIDO. A bit wordy.

AGNES. But very unsuspicious.

GUIDO. You carry the card about with you?

AGNES. I had no time to put it away.

GUIDO. You have answered it, then?

AGNES. Why not? It's the last. It arrived four days ago. And it's positively the last he's written as my husband.

[Guido makes as if to take the card; she makes a gesture of refusal and he seems hurt.]

AGNES. Just one word.

GUIDO. What sort of word, if I may ask?

AGNES. *Auf Wiedersehen.*

[Guido bites his lip.]

AGNES. Well, doesn't it seem proper? I didn't write "Auf gutes Wiedersehen," or "Auf glückliches Wiedersehen," simply "*Auf Wiedersehen.*"

GUIDO. And did you write him letters, too, during this time?

AGNES. Only one.

GUIDO. Well — well!

AGNES. That was before there was anything between you and me; before that evening — when you suddenly appeared in my garden under my window — and called my name in the dark. Yes, in this way one sometimes writes a farewell letter without suspecting it! How mysterious life — *[Guido has taken the card in his hand and seems bent on crumpling it.]*

AGNES. What are you doing, Guido?

GUIDO. You love him still.

AGNES *[earnestly]*. No, Guido, I love no one but you. I have never loved anybody — not even Felix — as much as I love you. *[Grasping his hand.]* But I shall never cease *[letting his hand go]* to admire and to respect Felix Staufner; to be spiritually akin to Felix Staufner, the writer. In a certain sense relations such as existed between Felix and myself can never alter — never. The fact that we were married is of least importance. Even if I should never see him again, if we should remain miles and miles GUIDO *[interrupting]*. Yes, if you would only remain miles and miles apart! Well and good. Then everything would be all right; then I'd have nothing to oppose to your spiritual relations. But, unfortunately, I can't spend my life taking endless trips. I must be back in harness in the damned —

AGNES. Certainly; I'd never permit you to give up your profession. You must work, even if it isn't absolutely necessary. I don't propose to take up with an idler.

GUIDO. I don't intend to give up my profession. But what's to prevent my practicing it elsewhere? I'll speak to the governor. As it is, he's been planning for sometime to establish a branch office in Germany or America.

AGNES. Or Australia.

GUIDO. The farther the better.

AGNES. Guido!

GUIDO. I simply can't bear to have you meet your former husband again.

AGNES *[determined]*. I shan't permit you at the eleventh hour to violate all our stipulations. You know that

Felix is not like other men —

GUIDO. Do you really believe that he won't find another — friend very soon?

AGNES. A friend? No. Never. A mistress — certainly. And whether her name be Bianca or something else — I only hope that I'll be able to approve of his choice.

GUIDO. Why do you hope so? Do you intend to be friendly with the future mistress of your husband?

AGNES. If things should fall out so —

GUIDO. They will not fall out so. I wish to make clear to you that I desire to keep our home — as soon as our affairs are in order, and that will be soon, I trust — respectable. And I warn you that this — mind you, I don't say uninteresting — partly dubious crowd of artists and actorfolk of both sexes who used to frequent your house, will not be welcome under my roof.

AGNES. As regards dubious affairs, you ought to —

GUIDO. That's another matter entirely. A real passion explains, condones everything. And besides, your husband deserves his fate.

AGNES. Oh!

GUIDO. A woman, I hold, must be guarded jealously like a priceless gem. One should never leave a young woman alone, wholly alone among a crowd of young people in summer — near a lake —

AGNES. In spite of his doubts he trusted me. It's all part and parcel of the paradox in his makeup.

GUIDO. A man doesn't trust a woman whom he loves. He trembles for her. He fights for her. I shall never trust you. Even after we've lived together for years. Even if we should have children — and we will have children. I will always be concerned about you. To make sure of a woman one must keep on insulting her.

AGNES. But he never resorted to that. He was jealous oftener than you think. He was jealous even of you.

GUIDO. Of me —! Well, I thought —

AGNES. That was before he had the slightest grounds. Even then — How mysterious —

GUIDO. Life is.

AGNES. We had scarcely spoken three times together. Naturally he said nothing, but I noticed that it was so. For the life of me, I couldn't make it out. You were out sailing on the lake all day long — at the outset. Only in the evening did you venture to sit beside us on the hotel terrace and chatter all manner of nonsense which, to tell the truth, didn't interest me the least bit.

GUIDO. Nonsense — why —

AGNES. I only mean to say that everything was quite harmless in those early days. Admit that you didn't trouble at all about me. The little Baroness Fellah meant more to you — and the Lord knows who else? But

he saw it coming. I observed it in his glances. He suspected immediately that you — that you only —

GUIDO. And still he left you to your own devices. Saw it coming and went away on a trip.

AGNES. It's a way with him when he's greatly absorbed in a piece of work. Everything else is put aside.

GUIDO. And he fled *[pointedly]* to solitude. AGNES *[ignoring his innuendo]*. At all events he stopped caring about people — that is, about people whom he loved.

GUIDO. Did he leave you alone often?

AGNES. Sometimes. But that was not the worst. It was much more uncomfortable when he stayed at home and left me alone. When my voice had lost its caress, when I became, in a measure, paler, more shadowy than any being he ever created; when I felt myself snuffed out — for him —

GUIDO. For me — you will never be snuffed out — never, Agnes.

AGNES *[as if waking from a trance]*. Never, Guido! You will never leave me alone. You will never repair to solitude and forget me for days, weeks, at a stretch, as he's done. It isn't good to leave us women alone. You are right, Guido. It's quite perilous — it's — *[For several minutes past there has been a commotion in the waiting room. Passengers come up the steps. The Guard enters from the right and goes to the platform door.]*

GUIDO. What's the matter? *[Glancing at the clock above the buffet.]* There's still twelve minutes. *[Guard opens the door.]*

AGNES. It seems as if —

GUIDO *[quickly to the Guard].* The Innsbruck train? —

GUARD. Yes, sir.

GUIDO. I thought you said it wouldn't arrive before ten minutes yet —?

GUARD. She's made up a bit for lost time.

GUIDO *[to Agnes].* You are pale. Don't you care to — *[Passengers go through the waiting room to the platform outside.]*

AGNES *[passionately shaking her head].* Let us go out, don't you think?

GUIDO. On the platform?

AGNES. Yes. It's better than waiting out here. I wish him to see us directly from the car window.

GUIDO. I don't know.

AGNES. Come. *[They start to go out on the platform.]*

GUARD. Platform tickets, please.

GUIDO. Good Lord! *[Searching in his purse.]* Here. *[Offers the Guard money]*

GUARD. Over there, at the ticket machine.

GUIDO. But the train will be in by that time.

GUARD. There's lots of time yet.

GUIDO *[goes to the ticket machine, deposits a few coins and yanks the lever in vain].* It doesn't work.

GUARD *[going over to the machine, tries to manipulate the lever, fails, then shakes his head].* Don't work sometimes.

GUIDO. But we'll —

GUARD. Ah, there you are. It's all right now. *[Hands two tickets to Guido. Back to the door which he has previously closed and now reopens.]* Here she comes now. *[Noise of an incoming train.]*

AGNES. Your hand, Guido. *[Hand in hand they go through the door — way onto the platform. As they pass out Felix appears on the right, mounting the steps. He spies Agnes, makes as if to follow, observes almost simultaneously that she is not alone and is just in time to see her disappear hand in hand with Guido on the platform. He remains standing a moment. Then makes a step towards them. At the platform door he pauses again. Then he strides to the other platform door and seems to be following with his eyes the pair of them as they go to meet the incoming train. He steps back, passes his hand over his forehead and peers through the glass door. The pair vanish out of sight. The train has already stopped and the passengers pour in from the platform. Most of them pass through the waiting room to the steps on the right. Several take seats at the tables; several step up to the buffet and order refreshments. Felix advances to the center of the stage. The stream of passengers rushes by him. He feels he must get out of their path, so he steps back again to the open platform door. He looks for Agnes and Guido. Gazing intently out, he watches them. Then, as if fearing to be observed, he drops back. On his face there is depicted complete understanding of the situation. Answering a sudden impulse to escape, he hurries to the steps on the right. He remains standing there a moment, shakes his head and hastens again to the closed platform door, peering out. The last of the passengers are leaving the platform. Moving away from the door Felix comes to the front in an attitude of suspense, with his face contorted into a smile. Then, growing serious again, he seats himself at a table on the right, the same, in fact, at which Agnes and Guido had sat before. Mechanically he picks up a newspaper and glances above it in the direction of the platform door. The Guard has already shut the door. He opens it again. First there enters a belated woman with a multiplicity of hand bags, then a station official, and lastly Guido and Agnes. They do not at first discover Felix, who is intrenched behind his newspaper.]*

GUIDO. Amazing —

AGNES. Is there another train today?

GUIDO. Let's have a look at the time-table. *[They go to the time-table on the wall next to the steps. Guido studies it carefully.]* Nine — twelve — no, that's not from Innsbruck. If we could only find out somehow. Just wait —

FELIX *[putting the newspaper aside, rises and strides quickly toward Agnes and Guido, who are studying the time-table. For a space he stands motionless behind her. He speaks suddenly in an unsuspecting, joyous tone.]* Well, here you are, Agnes.

[Agnes turns around, likewise Guido, but they utter no word.]

FELIX *[overlooking the awkwardness of the situation very quickly].* You see, I came up on the earlier train, at noon. Unfortunately I couldn't telegraph you in time. It was a sudden whim of mine. I awoke somewhat earlier this morning. My things were all packed. So I said to myself: "Suppose you take the first train and loaf about Salzburg for several hours." I'm glad to see you, Agnes — glad to see you. *[Wrings her hand.]* How d'ye do, doctor? What are you doing here? En route for Vienna? *[Extends his hand.]* Your vacation's over, I suppose.

GUIDO *[hesitatingly taking the proffered hand].* No, I'm not going to Vienna. I was glad to escort your — your wife permitted me to — and, really — *[Agnes casts an anxious glance at him, which is not lost on Felix.]*

FELIX *[quickly interrupting].* Very good of you, doctor. My wife loves to chat. Very kind of you, doctor, to keep her company. When one has taken the trip thirty or forty times the beauties of nature grow banal. *[Suddenly.]* But Agnes, let me look at you. We haven't seen each other for such an age. Six weeks! I don't recollect our ever having been parted so long during the five years we've been married. Isn't that so?

AGNES. You're looking very well, Felix.

FELIX. Am I? Well, I hope so. And you, too. Why, you seem to have grown a little stouter. And you're sunburnt, quite sunburnt. You were out in the open a good deal, weren't you? And then the weather was simply glorious. But today — of course. It was very nice of you to come to meet me.

AGNES. But you asked me to.

FELIX. I simply wanted to let you know. I didn't reckon on it for a moment. Besides, it's two and a half hours from Seewalchen to here. And you had to change, too. Take it any way you like, it's a trip — even with the doctor's pleasant company.

GUIDO. As regards my accompanying your wife, allow me —

AGNES *[interrupting, suddenly to Felix].* You were here, then, at twelve? What have you done until now?

FELIX. I'll tell you presently. *[Indicating the table.]* Won't you join me — I've a tremendous hankering for a cup of coffee. And you? Or have you already had some? Waiter! Waiter! What was that you asked a moment ago? How I passed the time? Well, as it was dinner time, I dined in town, of course very well, too — at the Nürnberg. *[Sits.]* Well, doctor, won't you join us? *[Agnes sits.]*

GUIDO *[with a meaningful glance at Agnes].* I don't really know whether — You see, I have —

FELIX *[quickly].* No ceremony, doctor. Please. *[To waiter who approaches.]* Let us have some — *[to Agnes]* — coffee, eh? And what'll you have, doctor?

GUIDO *[who has taken a seat in response to a wink of Agnes].* I have just —

AGNES *[quickly to waiter].* Three mélanges, please. *[Waiter is about to go.]*

FELIX. I'll have mine a bit strong. And, by the way, have you still got that coffee cake you had six weeks ago? It was delicious.

AGNES. You remember it still?

FELIX. You liked it, too. *[To the waiter.]* Well, bring us some coffee cake with the coffee. *[Waiter goes.]*

FELIX. NOW — what were we talking about? Oh, yes. I dined at the Nürnberg and then I loafed about town —

AGNES. In the rain?

FELIX. Ah, I didn't mind it the least bit. Coming upon the sultriness of the morning it was a veritable godsend. Then, you see, I called on Sebastian Schwartz for half an hour.

AGNES *[by way of explanation to Guido].* That's the antique dealer, you know.

FELIX. You aren't interested in antiques, I presume, doctor?

GUIDO. I don't understand enough about them. But —

FELIX *[quickly to Agnes].* He has lots of beautiful things. Some of them quite expensive.

AGNES. And I suppose you untied your pursestrings liberally again.

FELIX. Not much. I've already had several things sent on to Seewalchen to the villa. A nampulla such as we've wanted for a long time.

AGNES. For the dining room?

FELIX. Yes, of course. Certainly you can hang it in the dining room if you wish. And then I bought a lovely amulet. Baroque. Genuine. Aqua marine with a little silver chain — wait until you see it. I have it here in my purse. But, tell me, when did you arrive? At four, I take it?

AGNES. No, I dined in town, too.

GUIDO. We had dinner here, too.

AGNES *[resuming].* We ate at the station and —

FELIX *[quickly].* And loafed about town until now. Curious, isn't it, that we didn't meet?

GUIDO. We took a drive.

AGNES. Considering the bad weather — the doctor was very kind — *[Waiter brings coffee, etc. Felix, moving back his chair, causes the table and glasses to tremble. Waiter is somewhat taken aback. Guido seems*

to hesitate a moment, then, — with nervous haste, he does likewise. Felix stirs his coffee. The waiter goes off with the newspapers.]

GUIDO *[with sudden determination].* Mr. Staufner, I must ask —

FELIX *[quickly].* But drink your coffee, old man. And let me enjoy mine while I may. Then, if it suits you, you may ask my indulgence to whatever you please. I find tiffin the nicest refreshment of the day. I can do without my dinner, but never without my afternoon coffee.

GUIDO. Mr. Staufner, you asked me a moment ago whether I was going to Vienna. Well —

FELIX *[quickly].* Excuse my hawing asked. I noticed the effect on you was painful. I don't want to have appeared indiscreet. What you have decided to do with the rest of your vacation is clearly a personal matter. Enjoy life as long — and so on. Aren't you going to take over the management of the Höllenstein factory when your father is ready to retire —

GUIDO. My father is quite robust. He has no intention of retiring from business. *[He endeavors to exchange glances with Agnes who, however, avoids his look.]*

FELIX. HOW old is he, if I may ask?

GUIDO. Sixty-two. But as I said —

FELIX. In any case, the main burden will soon fall to your shoulders. So enjoy life as long as you may. And above all things else, travel.

AGNES. The doctor has traveled considerable. He's already been to America.

GUIDO. Yes, I've been to South America. FELIX. Indeed. To South America. And do you know Japan at all?

GUIDO. No, I don't know Japan.

FELIX. Japan has lured me for ever so long. Don't you feel like going there too, Agnes?

AGNES. There are many places not so far.

FELIX. What of that? Do you expect to travel round the world inch by inch? It can't be done. What kind of a hat are you wearing, Agnes?

AGNES. You know it.

FELIX. The red band is kind of new to me.

AGNES. Yes, it is new.

FELIX. Quite a summer hue. It glows and sparkles. *[He repeats the phrase, but almost in an uncontrollable threatening tone of voice.]* It glows and sparkles.

[Agnes gazes at him in terror and shoots a sudden glance at Guido. Guido involuntarily assumes a dignified posture.]

FELIX *[glancing up, in a gentler tone].* You are not interested in women's hats, I presume, doctor?

GUIDO *[As if perceiving an opportunity to fasten his fangs].* Not generally. But I am interested in this one, Mr. Staufner. And not only —

[Agnes looks at him frightened.]

FELIX. Not only in the hat, but also, the wearer. That *goes* without saying. I am too, doctor. Naturally the hat would be a matter of indifference to both of us if, say, it hung over there on that hook.

GUARD *[entering and calling out].* Passenger train to Schwannemarkt, Bocklabruck, Atnang, Linz, Vienna.

GUIDO *[pushing back his chair as if to rise].* Mr. Staufner —

FELIX. Oh, yes. That's your train. If you intend going back to Seewalchen you'll have to make a connection. *[To Agnes, who looks at him quite confused.]* You thought it was ours, too?
No, it is not ours, Agnes. I understand fully, doctor — this attraction to the field of your triumph. Yes, your triumph — *[laughing loudly]*. My cordial wishes are perhaps a little tardy at this moment.

GUIDO *[taken aback]*. How. *[Agnes gazes at Felix, not understanding.]*

FELIX. You — *[pause]* — won — at the Regatta, didn't you? —

GUIDO *[involuntarily heaving a sigh of relief]*. Oh, thank you. It was only the second prize.

AGNES *[likewise relieved].* How do you come to know about it? —

FELIX. Why, it's in the newspaper.

AGNES. You read the sporting page nowadays? Since when?

FELIX. Not all of it. But news about Seewalchen, for obvious reasons, interested me. Moreover, it was on the train, where one reads everything, even one's railway ticket. *[To Guido.]* Have you been interested in yachting very long?

GUIDO. Quite a number of years. On Ostersee mostly in the past.

FELIX. On Binnensee, I imagine, it's more difficult.

GUIDO. Not necessarily.

FELIX. Unfortunately, I know nothing about GUIDO. I suppose you haven't taken up sport, Mr. Staufner?

FELIX. Oh, yes — yes. Mostly of a tourist character. I climb a good deal. In Stubai I negotiated several trails.

AGNES. Alone?

FELIX. The big ones, yes. On the little ones I had a party along. Two ladies — mother and daughter. The young lady kept up very nicely on foot.

AGNES. Miss Bianca Walter —?

FELIX. HOW do you —? Why, yes.

AGNES. I hazard the guess she's blond. That's your favorite color.

FELIX. Of course, she's blond. Would you care to know more about her? She's a young actress just beginning her career. She played something for me once — The Jungfrau von Orleans.

AGNES. Very nice.

FELIX. It was, indeed. By the bye, I should have her picture somewhere about me.

AGNES. Her picture? You have her picture about you —?

FELIX. Yes. *[He takes it out of his breast pocket.]* She gave it to me before I left. The first chance I get I'd like to show it to a manager. She wants ever so much to get a position in Vienna. She imagines it only needs a word from me. These women certainly are naïve! The mother wasn't bad-looking, either.

AGNES. Isabella.

FELIX. Isabella? Why, yes, of course. Isabella was the mother's name.

AGNES. And the daughter's Bianca.

FELIX. Isabella was the mother's name and the daughter's Bianca. Sounds like a ballad almost. *[To Guido.]* Don't you think so?

GUIDO *[icily]*. I'm no judge.

AGNES. But I thought you had no intention of making any acquaintances there, and that you were going to devote yourself exclusively to your work.

FELIX. Oh, appearances to the contrary, I was quite assiduous. You will be quite satisfied with me, I think.

AGNES *[with an effort]*. Have you finished.

FELIX. Finished? Not quite.

AGNES. Under the circumstances little else was to be expected.

FELIX. HOW malevolent you can be, Agnes! No reason for it — at all. When luck's on my side, as you know, I can get through in three or four days. Only I need your advice.

AGNES *[joyful in spite of herself]*. My advice?

FELIX. Yes, without equivocation. First, I'd like to talk it over with you. I'll also read you as much as I have.

So let's not take the train back to Seewalchen for the present. Until I have cleared up everything I don't care to go back. And here in Salzburg, I know from previous experience I can work extraordinarily well. That's why we'll stay here for a few days.

AGNES. We're going to stay here? That's rather new to me.

FELIX. TO me, also. I simply mean that the idea struck me on the train. You're with me in this, aren't you? We've only got to telegraph to good old Therese, asking her to send you whatever you need — absolute necessities. Of course, some superfluous things, too. And whatever for the present you're urgently in want of we can purchase today. Or have you, by chance, in response to some secret presentiment, brought your little crocodile purse with you?

GUIDO *[as if sensing the underlying meaning. Externally unruffled, but without malice]*. I put the crocodile purse in my suitcase, thinking it safer there.

FELIX. Indeed? Capital! Then everything is in ship-shape. And you're glad to stay on, aren't you, Agnes? The three days, I promise you, will pass quickly. All difficulties will be surmounted — and before we return to our little country house I shall put the finishing touch to — *[he hesitates]*— "*The* Festival of Bacchus."

AGNES *[taken by surprise]*. "The Festival of Bacchus"?

FELIX. Yes; why these wide eyes of wonderment?

AGNES. You're writing "The Festival of Bacchus"?

FELIX. Yes.

AGNES. But you started out with quite a different purpose.

FELIX. Quite right. But, soon after, on the way to Stubaital, it flashed upon me, before anything else, I must do "The Festival of Bacchus." There are good and sufficient reasons for this change. It was conditioned by mysterious laws.

GUIDO. Yes, life is very mysterious.

FELIX. Life — no. Not more than ordinarily so. But art is. Yes, art is most — A thing of this sort is leavened within. It matures deep in the recesses of self. *[Indicating his forehead.]* Here one knows nothing about it. So it is. *[Breaking off in another tone.]* Two acts, as I said, are finished. Only in the third act I find I'm up against it, and no thoroughfare. Well, you'll hear it and, I have no doubt, something suggestive will occur to you.

AGNES. If you think so —— *[The waiter has appeared.]*

FELIX *[noticing him]*. Oh, yes. Well —?

GUIDO. Mine was a mélange —

FELIX. What a notion, doctor? *[The waiter.]* Three mélanges and three portions of coffee cake.

GUIDO. Four — I had two.

FELIX *[laughing].* Ah, yes; four then.

WAITER. Five.

FELIX. Five?

AGNES. You crumbled one.

FELIX. Oh, did I? Really? Well, then, five.

WAITER. TWO crowns, 40 pfennig.

FELIX *[counting].* Very well.

WAITER *[discreetly to Guido].* And then there were two lemon sodas.

GUIDO. Ah, yes. *[Is about to pay.]* —

FELIX *[noticing Guido's attempt].* What is that? Ah, yes? *[Gaily.]* Please, please. *[Is about to pay.]*

GUIDO. I insist —

FELIX. Please let me. Two sodas. Here you are. *[Pays. Waiter goes. Felix extracts a cigarette case from his pocket and offers Guido a cigarette.]*

GUIDO *[falteringly helping himself to a cigarette].* Thanks.

[Felix offers him a light and then proceeds to light his own.]

GUIDO. And now, if you'll excuse me, I must be going.

FELIX. Good day, doctor, and a pleasant journey to you — whatever route you decide to take.

GUIDO. Thanks. Good bye, my dear Mrs. Staufner. *[Not yet does he dare to extend his hand.]* I trust soon — *[overjoyed at the sudden idea]* — perhaps I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again at the première of your husband's new play —

AGNES. I shall be pleased —

FELIX. You're in no way bound to attend, doctor.

GUIDO. No trouble at all. You see, I've never missed one of your first nights yet. So, naturally, I shall not fail to be present at the opening of "The Festival of Bax—"

FELIX. Bacchus, doctor.

GUIDO. I beg your pardon.

FELIX. It's not a mythological play, as appears from the title, neither is it in verse, if such things scare you away.

GUIDO. Not at all.

FELIX. The title is only used metaphorically, of course. If I attempted to put on a real Festival of Bacchus, I'd have no end of trouble with the censor, as you can imagine.

GUIDO. I'm ashamed to confess that I don't know what a Festival of Bacchus is.

FELIX. Really? The Festival of Bacchus was a quaint custom of the ancient Greeks — a religious custom, you might say.

GUIDO. A — religious custom?

FELIX *[with marginal lilt and brevity]*. Yes. A night was set aside once a year at the season of the vintage, if I err not, when men and women were granted unlimited freedom after a fashion.

GUIDO. Unlimited freedom —

FELIX *[very cool, merely informative]*. After a fashion. On this night of nights all family ties, all prescriptive laws were dissolved. Men, women, and girls departed from their homes at sundown — homes whose peace they had surrounded and protected — and repaired to a sacred grove (there were many such groves in the land) to celebrate under the sheltering wing of night the divine festival —

GUIDO. The divine festival —

FELIX. The divine festival.

GUIDO. Under the wing of night.

FELIX. Yes.

GUIDO. And supposing the moon shone?

FELIX. That did not matter. At daybreak — the festival was over, and every participant was pledged to forget with whom he celebrated his share of the divine festival. Pledged in all honor. That was a part of the religious custom — just as the celebration itself. To recognize one another afterward would have been considered in bad taste, as being, indeed, frivolous. And, as the saying runs, the votaries of the gods, somewhat tired and yet refreshed, in a measure even purified, wended their way home.

GUIDO. And at home one had an exciting theme for discussion ready to hand — until the next festival.

FELIX. At home nothing was allowed to be said about the festival. There'd be no sense in that. There was as little individual responsibility for the experiences of that night — as there is for dreams.

GUIDO. But didn't it sometimes happen that a couple who had found themselves together in a sacred grove, had no desire to escape from one another's sight so soon — and neither of them showed up at home?

FELIX. That was impossible. The penalty for that was death.

AGNES. Death —?

FELIX. Yes, death. They had to part when the sun rose. The ritual in this respect was very strict.

GUIDO. You say the penalty was death —?

FELIX. TO be exact, there was an extenuating circumstance.

GUIDO. Ah!

FELIX *[with emphasis]*. When two people who had found themselves together under the wing of night yearned for one another still on the following night — this happened less frequently than one imagines — no one was allowed, neither husband nor wife nor father nor mother, to stand in their way. And these two met again on the same spot where they had parted in the morning. But from the second night — and here we must really marvel at the wisdom of the priests — from this second night, which was no longer a festival to the god there was no asylum. Their former home was closed to them and they were for the remainder of their days dependent on one another. That is why so very few cared to leave their homes on the second night. *[Pause.]*

GUIDO. You've looked up the mythology of it pretty thoroughly for your comedy, Mr. Staufner.

FELIX. It wasn't necessary. If you were to investigate you would discover that my version doesn't correspond exactly. For, as I said, the Festival of Bacchus is but a symbol suitable to my purpose. My play is set in the present, and the present lacks several things which makes the revival of such a beautiful, simple and pure celebration as the ancient Festival of Bacchus, impossible. People have grown too irreligious. Instead of experiencing the natural naturally, they befog things with their pedantic psychology. Nowadays Festivals of Bacchus are no longer possible because our love-life is murky, yes, poisoned by lies and self-deception, by jealousy and fear, by insolence and remorse. Only occasionally — and this but in pious souls — there is kindled a faint or still more brilliant reflection of the marvellous magic which once pervaded the Festival of Bacchus. And this magic is perhaps of a higher order than the other. But who of us can glory in his own piety? Who of us —?

GUARD *[entering].* Express to Freilassing, Rosenheim, Munich, Paris —

FELIX *[in an altered tone of voice].* Isn't that your train, doctor?

GUIDO *[surprised].* My train —?

AGNES. For Paris. Of course it's your train, doctor.

GUIDO. Well let it be — And now I must see about my baggage. Dear Mrs. Staufner — *[Agnes gives him her hand. Guido hesitates a moment, then kisses it. He bows to Felix. Felix extends his hand. Guido takes it hurriedly, then goes down the steps. Pause. Commotion. Passengers pass out to the platform with porters, etc.]*

AGNES *[looking at him, after a long pause].* And what kind of a reflection is that?

[Felix looks at her as if he did not quite follow her meaning.] —

AGNES. The reflection in pious souls which you just mentioned, which to you signifies a loftier magic than the marvellous festival itself — this festival which according to you is no longer celebrated nowadays? —...

FELIX *[almost crudely].* This magic is called — forgetting. But we don't believe in that, you and I.

AGNES. You may be right. There may, however, be another which is easier to believe in. *[Felix gives her a questioning look.]*

AGNES. Understanding. *[She has the picture in her hand and crushes it. Felix laughs curtly.]*

GUIDO *[entering from the right with two handbags. He steps up to the table].* Pardon me, since it was most convenient to check both bags on one ticket — I —

AGNES *[anxiously].* Thank you, very much. Please put it here.

GUIDO. Don't mention it. *[He places Agnes handbag on the chair which he previously occupied.] —.*

FELIX *[rising suddenly].* Dr. Wernig —

GUIDO *[comprehending, with great dignity].* If it is your pleasure, Mr. Staufner, I can likewise put off my departure.

AGNES *[quickly, with determination].* You will depart on this train, Guido.

[Felix looks at her. Guido stands irresolute. Pause.]

FELIX. You may go! *[Guido bows and goes out on the platform.]*

FELIX *[sits. His face is contorted. Then he rises again, as if to follow Guido. Agnes restrains him by grasping his arm. Felix reseats himself. Agnes tears Bianca's picture into small bits.]*

FELIX *[bitterly].* If this were all!

AGNES *[with a ghost of a smile].* We must be pious, both of us.

FELIX *[in a sudden hollow tone of voice].* I hate you!

AGNES. And I hate you a thousand times more bitterly — *[with a new expression of tenderness]* — my lover!

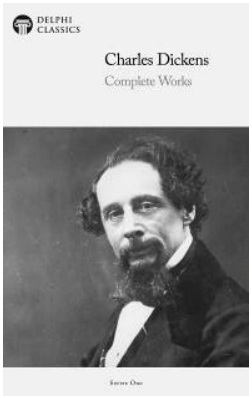
[CURTAIN.]

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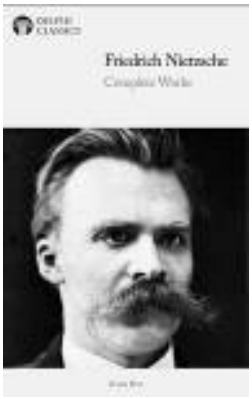
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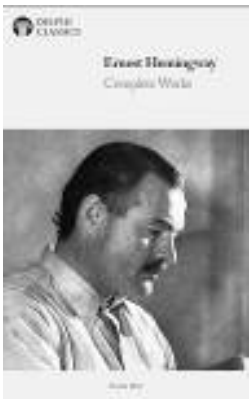
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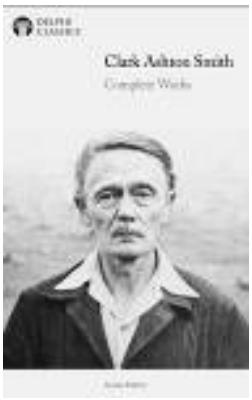
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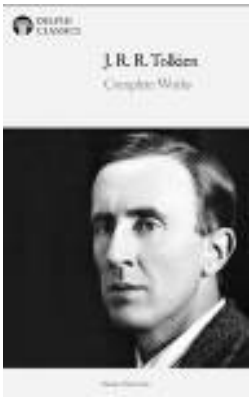
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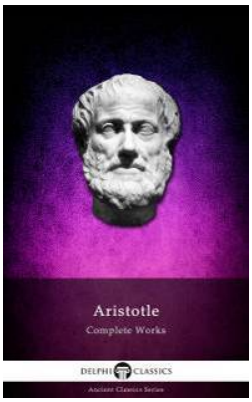
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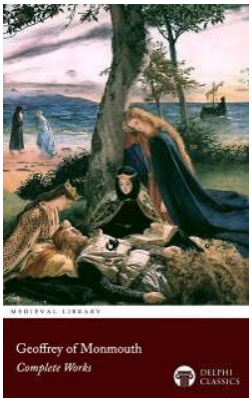
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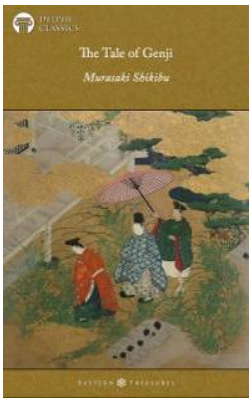
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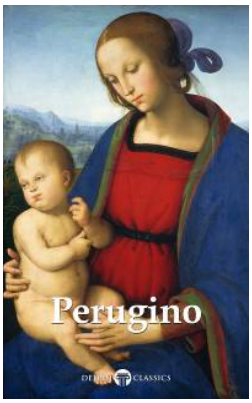
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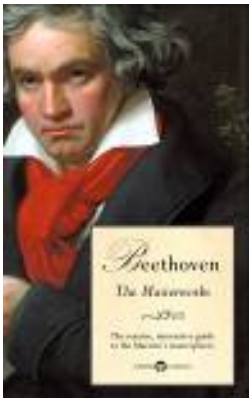


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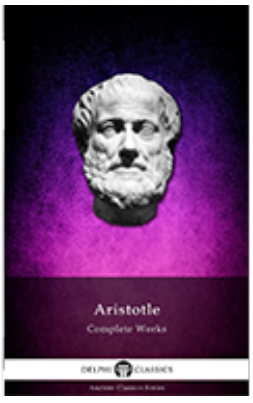


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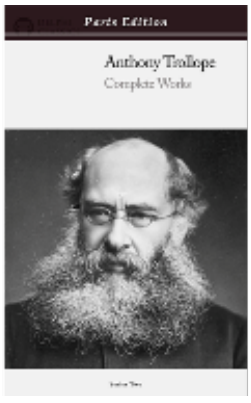
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Zentralfriedhof, Vienna, one of the largest cemeteries in the world by number of interred — Schnitzler's final resting place. He died on 21 October 1931 in Vienna of a brain haemorrhage.



Schnitzler's grave